

# CHIT-CHAT:

O R,

## NATURAL CHARACTERS;

And the MANNERS of

## REAL LIFE,

Represented in a Series of interesting  
ADVENTURES.

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V O L. II.

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МАТЕРИАЛОВ ДЛЯ

АНГЛИЙСКОГО

СТИЛЯ



VOI. II

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МОСЕВА

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# CHIT CHAT, &c.

## BOOK the THIRD.

CHARLOTTE had now perfectly recovered her health and spirits. The friendly Mrs. Bootle supplied the place of her once loved Arabella, who had even been so rude as never to enquire after her during her long confinement, but spent her time in a forgetfulness of every thing except her pleasure, which was the name she gave to a continued round of riot and extravagance. Mr. Frankly, who found that Charlotte's distemper, tho' it had made a considerable

alteration in her outward form, had not deprived her of that sweetness of disposition, and gracefulness of behaviour, for which she was remarkable, was greatly pleas'd at her recovery. As she was not fit to appear in public, he procured her all the amusement she could enjoy amongst the small circle of her friends who came to visit her, and thought himself well rewarded by the satisfaction with which she seemed to receive those tokens of his esteem: not doubting but that he should at last gain all his ends.

MR. BYERFLY was also highly delighted with his daughter, who began to be as lively as ever. She was, indeed, more easy in her mind than she had been a good while, and MRS. BOOTLE had greatly contributed to make her so, by soothing her with the hopes of WELLFORD's return: she flattered herself that he had too much good sense to place his affections merely on a set of features, or fine complexion; and knowing the situation of her own faith-

faithful heart, was easily led to believe that if she could have an opportunity of conversing freely with him again, his inclination for her might revive. She therefore determined not to listen to the address of any other man, and threw out several hints to her father concerning the impossibility of Frankly's succeeding, because she found he continued to encourage his expectations: the old gentleman understood her hints, and despairing of being able to remove her seeming aversion to matrimony, he therefore told Frankly the first time he saw him, that he did not know a man in the world, whom he wish'd more sincerely to call his son, but that his daughter could not be persuaded to pass her life with him. "As I have a great esteem for you, Sir," said he, "I think 'tis pity you should wafte your time in dangling after her: excuse my freedom: I have long thought you liked Charlotte well enough to make her a wife: but I am afraid she never will consent: and I have too great a regard for

“ you both, to force a union; where the  
“ chief ingredient, inclination, is wanting.  
“ Leave us then, Sir, and seek for a girl  
“ who is more sensible of your merit.”

FRANKLY, not in the least expecting such an address from Mr. Byersley, especially at a time when he thought Charlotte was more easy than usual, thanked him in the strongest terms for his good opinion of him, which he said would render him more desirous to continue in his family, instead of making him quit it. “ I love Miss Byersly, Sir, added he, with the fondest passion, and have not so much reason to despair as you imagine.” “ Indeed, Sir,” said Mr. Byerfley, “ you deceive yourself. I have known my daughter longer than you have, and can assure you, that the pleasure with which she receives all you do to oblige her, results intirely from gratitude, good humour, and a new flow of spirits, occasioned by her recovery from her late dreadful distemper. Believe me

“ me, Sir, I don’t think there is a better  
“ girl in the world than my Charlotte,  
“ nor one who will do more to please  
“ a father than she will to please me ; I  
“ have used every argument I am master  
“ of, because I have a value for you.  
“ But all to no purpose. Do not there-  
“ fore expect, what I am almost certain  
“ will never happen. Think no more of  
“ her. Partial as I am to my own child  
“ in thinking there is not a better ; I  
“ know there may be as good ; and you  
“ may find one who will please you as  
“ well.” “ I don’t believe I ever shall,”  
replied Frankly with a serious air, “ I am  
“ very sorry that all my hopes are blasted ;  
“ yet, Sir, as you have hitherto so much  
“ honoured me with your esteem, give  
“ me leave still to enjoy your daughter’s  
“ conversation, as often as she will per-  
“ mit. If I must never indulge the  
“ transports of a lover, let me be intitled  
“ to the intimacies of a friend. I cannot  
“ bear to quit a family in which I have  
“ spent so many agreeable hours. I hope  
“ this request will not be deemed unre-

"sonable; and in order to be more de-  
"serving of it, I promise never to let the  
"lover appear in my behaviour: for I  
"would not offend the only woman in  
"the world whom I am ambitious of  
"pleasing," "Your behaviour, Sir,"  
"replied Mr. Byersley, "has ever been,  
"since I have known you, so unexcep-  
"tionable, that all apologies are needless.  
"You may be assured, that your com-  
"pany will always be acceptable to me.  
"I only mentioned my thoughts on this  
"affair to you, that you might not be  
"disappointed." Frankly again thanked  
Mr. Byerfly, whom he highly reverenced  
for his openness of heart, but his sorrow  
was increased, when found so many ob-  
stacles to his principal desire.

As lovers are apt to be very sanguine,  
Frankly would not give up Charlotte en-  
tirely, and tho' he was vexed at the small  
progress he had made, he yet appeared  
lively and entertaining as ever.

SUCH

SUCH was his situation, for several months, when an alteration happened in Mr. Byersley's family, which he could not relish at first, because he was thereby deprived for a while of his mistress's company.

AN old and very distant relation of Mr. Byersley's, in Somersetshire, died, and left him a large estate, on condition that he and his heirs took his name, which was Egerton. This old gentleman had lived a bachelor till fifty, and spent all his time in sporting and drinking: he was then deeply smitten with a tenant's fresh-coloured daughter, whom he married, and by whom he had a son who lived to the age of fifteen, and broke his neck by leaping a ditch. The loss of so promising a son, 'twas thought, hastened his death, and made Mr. Byersley the possessor of a fortune he never expected to enjoy. As his presence was necessary on the spot, he and Charlotte prepared for their journey;

the latter having, with her father's consent, invited Mrs. Bootle to go with them. (Frankly too would have been glad to make one of the party, but as neither he nor Mr. Egerton had mentioned a word to each other on that subject, he was forced to remain in town) They spent three months in this excursion ; but as nothing material happened to them, I shall pass it over, and hasten to relate their adventures in London.

Mrs. Bootle, soon after her arrival in town, came one morning to Mr. Egerton's with an uncommon vivacity, and luckily finding Charlotte alone, cried, " O, my " dear, I have strange news to tell you ! " " I hope it is both good and true, by the " pleasure it seems to have given you," " replied Charlotte; " but you are out " of breath; sit down and compose your- " self." " I don't know whether I can or " no," said she, " for I have seen Mr. " Ramsden." " Mr Ramsden ? — when, " where, how ? — tell me every particu-  
lar,

" lar, I beseech you." " Yesterday after  
 dinner," said Mrs. Bootle, " as I was  
 reading in the parlour, my maid came  
 in and told me that a gentleman in  
 mourning desired to see me, if I was  
 alone. Guess at my astonishment when  
 Mr. Ramsden enter'd the room. He  
 approached me with an unusual gravity,  
 and said, " I come once more, Madam,  
 to know if I may have the happiness to  
 renew our acquaintance." Imagine  
 my confusion. I blush'd, trembled, and  
 knew not what answer to make. In short,  
 I never behav'd so foolishly in my life.  
 He perceiving the dilemma I was in,  
 went on, " I don't know whether I must  
 impute this silence to excess of love,  
 or an over-weight of grief, at the sight  
 of one who once thought himself dear  
 to you.—Perhaps it arises from a sus-  
 pence which I will instantly remove.  
 My wife, Madam," continued he, " is  
 dead, and tho' she well deserved the  
 best of husbands, my heart was so  
 thoroughly yours, that I could never

“ be happy with another woman. I mar-  
“ ried (when I thought you was lost to  
“ me) to please an indulgent father, who  
“ now as earnestly wishes to call her  
“ daughter whom I have so long wished  
“ to call wife.” He was quite melted as  
“ he pronounced these words, and approach-  
“ ing me with all his former fondness, seiz’d  
“ my hand and press’d it to his bosom.  
“ Oh, speak to me, my dearest Lydia,”  
“ said he, “ for I may now call thee by  
“ that tender name.” It was a long time  
“ before I could utter a word, so much was  
“ I affected. I almost fainted, and was ob-  
“ liged to sit down : he drew his chair close  
“ to me, look’d with the kindest pity on my  
“ condition, and gently said, “ I will not  
“ press my Lydia for an answer, tho’ I  
“ am very impatient, till she has recov-  
“ ered her surprize. I have been to  
“ blame. I should not have come so  
“ abruptly. But pardon my abruptness,  
“ for ’twas owing to the violence of my  
“ love.” “ Your behaviour, Mr. Rams-  
“ den,” said I, “ wants no apology ; it  
“ never did want any ; but I must desire  
“ a few

" a few moments, in order to compose  
 " my fluttered spirits." " You shall have  
 " time enough, my love," said he;  
 " you will, you must be now for ever  
 " mine. Let me only have one consent-  
 " ing look from those dear eyes, and I  
 " shall be satisfied, till you have thought  
 " — " On what can I think," replied  
 " I, " but on your unshaken constancy.  
 " Believe me, Sir, I never was complete-  
 " ly happy till this moment." " My  
 " dearest creature," said he, " that speech  
 " transports me. I ask no more. O,  
 " Lydia, how much have I suffered dur-  
 " ing our tedious separation, which I much  
 " feared would last for ever. Have not  
 " you also suffered? Tell me, my love."  
 " We will not now talk of our sufferings,"  
 " said I, " if they are over" " If they  
 " are over, replied he quickly, have you  
 " then still any doubts? Is there any  
 " new obstacle? I know of none,"  
 " said I, " you still love, and are at li-  
 " berty. I love as much, and have no  
 " engagement." " Then nothing can  
 " hurt us," said he, " what joy you give

“ me ! Since we are thus agreed, let not  
“ any scrupulous niceties retard our union :  
“ none who know of our former attach-  
“ ment will wonder that it is renewed  
“ when our difficulties are surmounted.  
“ As I have no child, my fortune is not  
“ embarrassed, but shall be at my dearest  
“ Liddy’s command. Fix then the nup-  
“ tial day, and I will use all my endeavour  
“ to make every succeeding one as happy.”  
“ You, Miss Egerton, who have been in  
“ love, may guess what infinite delight I  
“ felt ; you may also guess what answer I  
“ made to the man on whom I always  
“ doated, and had so much reason to  
“ esteem. I believe I mentioned some-  
“ thing about decency in waiting till he  
“ was out of mourning, but he would not  
“ hear a syllable upon that subject. In  
“ short, my dear, I at last told him that  
“ his will should be mine. He is to  
“ bring his father to me this afternoon,  
“ for the generous man insists upon mak-  
“ ing a settlement for me, equal to his  
“ first wife’s, tho’ she brought him a  
“ large fortune, and I have only a scanty  
“ one”

“ one.” “ I sincerely rejoice at this un-  
“ expected turn in your affairs,” said  
“ Charlotte, “ you have long deserved  
“ the happiness you are now going to  
“ experience, and surely the greatest  
“ which this world can afford, is to be  
“ fondly and faithfully beloved by a man  
“ of intrinsic worth.” Here Charlotte  
could not stifle a sigh, which Mrs. Bootle  
observing said, “ Don’t give way to me-  
“ lancholy reflections, my dear: I am  
“ not apt to be superstitious, yet I cannot  
“ help believing that you will see Well-  
“ ford again, the same engaging and  
“ sincere lover you ever thought him.”  
“ Dear Mrs. Bootle,” said Charlotte,  
“ don’t feed me with false hopes: I was  
“ not, perhaps, destined to spend my  
“ days in the manner I would chuse.”  
“ Aye, aye,” cried Mrs. Bootle, “ I  
“ was just in your pining condition, and  
“ almost despaired of success, but thanks  
“ to my cheerful friends, I recovered my  
“ spirits, and now you see am in a fair  
“ way to be rewarded for past uneasinesses:  
“ and I doubt not but you will hereafter  
“ have

" have as much occasion to rejoice as I  
" have now."

FRANKLY enter'd the room, and put a stop to their farther conversation on the subject of love.

MRS. Bootle went home after dinner, to wait for her visiters, and Charlotte told her father every thing that he was ignorant of that related to that lady, at her own request. In a few days they received an invitation to spend the evening with her. She then introduced them to Mr. Ramfden as her particular friends. They were exceedingly pleased with his easy air and sprightly conversation, and, in a short time, Mrs. Bootle was married to him. Charlotte and her father were both present at the ceremony, and the latter gave her away. Mr. Egerton, soon after this transaction, being known to have receiv'd so considerable an addition to his fortune, was pester'd with offers for his daughter; but as he found out the chief motive of them, from the manner in which they were made,

made, he rejected them all, without troubling her about them.

CHARLOTTE spent the greatest part of her leisure hours with her new-married friend, and was by her introduced to many of her husband's relations and acquaintance, who had paid congratulatory visits to her on her nuptials, and who were so well pleased with her as to commence an intimacy from that fortunate æra. Among these was a family of relations, some account of which will be necessary, both for the entertainment and emolument of the reader, as they will have a considerable share in the following part of this history.

MR. ASTON was a man of plain sense, truly benevolent, and possessed of a very good estate in Kent. His wife had excellent natural parts, and in her youth had been reckon'd a beauty : they were indeed an amiable couple, and only to be blamed for doating too much on an only daughter of two and twenty, whom they suffer'd .

fer'd to be as humourfome as she pleased, without controul.

MISS Aston was tall, handsome and genteel, but as wild as a colt untamed. Her head was so intoxicated with pleasure and a love of admiration, that the salutary admonitions of her parents (for they sometimes ventured to admonish her) were totally disregarded. They were, indeed, very sparing of them, because in the first place they would not drive her to extremities; and in the second, because her grandfather (who idoliz'd her) had left ten thousand pounds to her own disposal, on her being of age. Their chief care therefore, was to look out for a proper husband among the young men of fortune.

MR. Freemer was possessed of all the qualifications they wished for in a lover. He was young, rich, agreeable and prudent: a great admirer of the person of their daughter, and pleased with the good sense he knew she was mistress of, but wish'd to reclaim her from the errors she had

had fallen into before he married her. As he was of this rectifying turn, he did not always appear the passionate lover she expected. Besides, as she thought her beauty and fortune deserved a title, she was very little disposed to listen to his addresses.

THIS young lady soon contracted an intimacy with Charlotte, by going frequently to Mrs. Ramsden ; they grew very fond of her company ; and thereby pleased her mama, who hoped that the prudent gaiety of her new relation would occasion some change in her for the better. One day, when Charlotte and Mrs. Ramsden were sitting at work, she flew into the room, and, upon seeing how they were employed, scream'd out, " Good " God ! I have hurried myself to death " to get to you, to know if you will " go with me to the opera to-night. I " have been half the town over to make " a party, and, would you believe it, found " every creature so delightfully engaged, " while you sit as demurely with your  
needles,

“ needles, as if you had not one place to  
“ go to.” “ We are oblig’d to you,  
“ however, for the preference you gave  
“ us,” replied Mrs. Ramsden, with a  
smile ; “ but pray how have all your ac-  
“ quaintance parcelled out their time  
“ in such an enchanting manner, as to  
“ excite so much envy in you.” “ Oh !  
“ it’s impossible to tell you,” cried she,  
“ I am so fatigu’d, child ; but I’ll  
“ try —— I soon huddled on my  
“ clothes, between eleven and twelve (and  
“ monstrous early I thought I was) I  
“ called on Miss Giddy, whom I found  
“ within indeed, but full of business ; for  
“ her new French sack was just brought  
“ home, and Mons. Papillote waited to  
“ dress her hair : then she could not take  
“ her chocolate, because Lady Shuffle’s  
“ servant came to demand the twenty guि-  
“ neas she won the night before at Mrs.  
“ Fairplay’s rout, and which my lady  
“ could not possibly do without, because  
“ she plays to-night at the dutchess of  
“ Squander’s. Besides all these things,  
“ captain Rakewell’s valet waited for an  
“ answer

“ answer to his master’s letter ; so I found  
“ there was no speaking to her, and drove  
“ away to lady Di Ogle’s, who was sur-  
“ rounded by colonel Flutter, lord Vizard,  
“ Sir Flimsy Flash and Billy Babble, all  
“ fancying a masquerade dress for her next  
“ Thursday.” “ And pray,” interrupt-  
ed Mrs. Ramsden, “ what dress did her  
“ ladyship fix on.” “ Oh Lord ! my  
“ dear child,” cried Miss Aston, “ why,  
“ she had not determined when I came  
“ away ; and perhaps may not till half  
“ an hour before she goes. The colonel  
“ proposed she should be drest in white,  
“ like the Venus of Medicis ; but lord  
“ Vizard said that she should not be dis-  
“ guised in that dress ; but that if she  
“ went in the habit of a nun every body  
“ would be mistaken. Sir Flimsy told  
“ her she would make a divine Arcadian  
“ nymph ; and Billy lisped out his opi-  
“ nion, that she would look enchantingly  
“ pretty in a white lutestring domine  
“ pinked and flounced with blue and yel-  
“ low, and fringed with silver : and then,  
“ ma’am,” said he, “ if you will give  
“ me

" me leave to dress your ladyship's head,  
" I vow lady Tiff says I dres a head bet-  
" ter than Papillotte himself." " I left  
" them all laughing at Billy, and called  
" on Miss Gadabout and Miss Tridget;  
" but neither of them were at home. I  
" then stopp'd at Miss Whimsey's, who  
" was in a violent hurry to go to an auc-  
" tion of shells and china, where she in-  
" tended to make a great many purchases  
" to ornament her dressing-room, which  
" was intirely new-furnished last year; and  
" consequently, not fit to be seen at pre-  
" sent; and, as she was afraid of being  
" too late, I would not detain her, and so  
" came here." " Why this has been a  
" very unfortunate morning, indeed, Miss  
" Aston," said Mrs. Ramsden; but if Miss  
" Egerton's not engaged, and you can  
" bear with our regularity, we'll attend  
" you to the opera--tho' I forget myself  
" strangely; for, on second thoughts, I  
" can't promise absolutely 'till I've seen  
" Mr. Ramsden." " Now that is so ri-  
" diculous," cried Miss Aston, " indeed  
" my dear, you would be a most agreeable  
" crea-

" creature if you didn't care a pin for  
 " your husband." " Then I am certain,"  
 " replied Mrs. Ramsden, " that I shall be  
 " disagreeable as long as I live. " Well,  
 " that is so odd now," said Miss Aston,  
 " but indeed you have strange antiquated  
 " notions ; and if you were not the best-  
 " natur'd thing alive I could not endure  
 " you." " Why, Miss Aston," said  
 " Charlotte, " do you intend to marry  
 " a man you don't care for ? " " Most  
 " certainly, my dear," replied she, " if  
 " ever I marry at all ; tho', between you  
 " and I, I don't think I stand any chance."  
 " What does the wild creature mean,"  
 said Mrs. Ramsden. " Don't I know you  
 " are engag'd to Mr. Freemer." " I en-  
 " gag'd to Mr. Freemer?" " No, no, said  
 " she, " not altogether so bad as that  
 " neither : my papa and mama, I believe,  
 " indeed, would have me engaged to  
 " him ; but he is an insensible wretch,  
 " and I detest and abominate him. " In-  
 " sensible" cried Mrs. Ramsden ; why,  
 " I have been assur'd that he is extra-  
 " gantly fond of you." Miss Aston an-  
 swered her with a loud laugh, and then  
 " reco-

" recovering herself suddenly, and putting  
 " on a mighty solemn face, said, " In-  
 " deed, my dear Mrs. Ramsden, this is  
 " not an age for girls to make conquests,  
 " especially fine ones ; (looking as if she  
 " thought herself one of them.) There  
 " are too many of them. Beauty is no  
 " rarity now ; and, I'll lay my life, an  
 " ugly devil succeeds a thousand times  
 " better. I'm sure I've done every thing  
 " I could to attract the admiration of  
 " all the young fellows in town. I have  
 " turned up my hat both before and be-  
 " hind, lower'd my stays and shorten'd  
 " my petticoats : I always cover my bo-  
 " som with the clearest cyprus, and have  
 " almost lamed myself with tottering on  
 " French heels; but all to no purpose. 'Tis  
 " true I was twice mobb'd in the Park  
 " last summer, and once taken for a Gun-  
 " ning : but that was only by a set of  
 " awkward wretches whom no-body knows,  
 " and whose preposterous behaviour shock-  
 " ed me to death." Mrs. Ramsden and  
 Charlotte, tho' they could not help smiling at  
 this rhapsody, were sorry to see so fine a girl  
 so mistaken in her notions ; and the former  
 " said,

" said, Give me leave, my dear Miss Aston,  
 " to ask a few serious questions. Don't you  
 " think that you would gain more admis-  
 " sion, by taking less pains about it ;  
 " and that men of sense would be more  
 " charm'd with a decent simplicity of  
 " dress and an unaffected modesty ?"  
 " My dear," replied Miss Aston, " pray,  
 " who are your men of sense ? Free-  
 " mer, I suppose you would insinuate is  
 " one ; and every way qualified to make,  
 " what you call a good husband : who  
 " ought, you will say, to be sober, pru-  
 " dent, frugal, and so forth : when per-  
 " haps he is the most nauseous creature  
 " breathing ? But you shall hear now  
 " what requisites are necessary, in my  
 " opinion, to make a man tolerable. He  
 " must be handsome and well made, he  
 " must have a taste perfectly fashionable, an  
 " easy assured behaviour, a prodigious  
 " deal of good-nature, an immense for-  
 " tune, and——" " Hold, hold," cried  
 Mrs. Ramsden, " your men will do well  
 " enough for a partner at a ball : but  
 " there's some difference between such a  
     "one,

“ one, and a partner for life, as you will  
“ find after you are married.” “ Well,”  
cried Miss Aston, “ I should be very glad  
“ to try, but not such a stupid animal as  
“ Freemer, I assure you. Why, you don’t  
“ know him ; the monster has no pas-  
“ sions. I’ll give you an instance now :  
“ A few days ago, lady Dî had promised  
“ to call me to go with her to the play,  
“ and, as I knew she was never early, I  
“ had deferred dressing me till near six :  
“ I then heard a violent rap, and, think-  
“ ing she was come for me, ran hastily  
“ down with my gown unpinn’d, and  
“ without my handkerchief : but how  
“ was I disappointed and vexed to find  
“ only Freemer in the parlour : how-  
“ ever, I was resolved to make the most of  
“ the wretch, and see how he would be-  
“ have ; so appear’d quite careless as if I  
“ hardly knew he was there, and began  
“ to display before the glass while Nanny  
“ pinned me behind. But, tho’ I never  
“ looked so well in my life, the creature  
“ seemed no more affected than if I had  
“ been his grandmother : but after a  
“ cool,

" cool," " Your servant, Madam."—  
 " What, going out? He took up a  
 " book that lay in the window, and read  
 " till the maid was gone. Then, to be  
 " sure, I expected at least a few raptures;  
 " but not one was utter'd : he only asked  
 " me if I treated all my men-visiters a-  
 " like ; or if he was alone honoured with  
 " so much familiarity. This speech, you  
 " may imagine, quite provoked me ; so  
 " I told him plainly, that if he took my  
 " behaviour for any distinction in his fa-  
 " vour, he was very much deceived ; for  
 " I never intended to shew him any.  
 " What do you think was the creature's  
 " answer? Why, that he saw too plain-  
 " ly that I was displeased with him, but  
 " that I might have shew'd my dislike  
 " without exposing myself. I then lost  
 " all patience, and disdaining to make  
 " any reply, was hastening out of the  
 " room when he stopt me with this faw-  
 " ing speech. " What, is my charming  
 " Betsy quite irreconcileable? Will she  
 " leave me without telling me wherein I  
 " have been so unfortunate as to offend

“ her ? ” “ Well,” interrupted Mrs.  
“ Ramsden, you could not surely be angry  
“ with him then ? ” “ Oh, but I was,”  
“ cried she, “ more than ever.” “ He  
“ shock’d me excessively by calling me  
“ Betsy : how dares he be so insolent, when  
“ he knows I detest the horrid appella-  
“ tion ? He certainly thinks I am the  
“ offspring of some country clown or low  
“ mechanic. How could my parents  
“ ever dream of giving me so odious a  
“ name, when there’s a Caroline, an Emi-  
“ lia, a Sophia, a Diana, and a Char-  
“ lotte ? ” Lord ! Miss Egerton,” added  
“ she, “ how much I envy your name ! ”  
“ I am sorry for it,” said Charlotte ; “ for  
“ I am so very indifferent about those tri-  
“ fles, that if it was possible to change with  
“ you, I would not hesitate a moment.”  
“ Prodigious ! ” cried Miss Aston, “ you  
“ are as stupid, I was going to say, as  
“ Freemer.” “ Indeed, Miss Aston,”  
“ said Mrs. Ramsden, “ I must chide  
“ you a little now : you were quite  
“ wrong to appear half dressed to your  
“ lover ; and still more so, in being of-  
“ fended

fended at his not offering to take  
 liberties on such an occasion. None  
 but a professed wanton, you will par-  
 don my freedom, my dear, can be  
 supposed to act in that manner ; but  
 for a young lady educated as you  
 have been. — Indeed, I am quite a-  
 shamed for you ; tho' I am far from  
 thinking you had any other intention  
 than to gain a few speeches on your per-  
 sonal accomplishments. But, believe  
 me, my dear, the beauties of your per-  
 son will be greatly increased by con-  
 cealment, and rendered much more de-  
 sirable. When you go to buy a piece  
 of silk, lace, or any other ornament,  
 would you chuse the piece that is hung  
 out for show ?" Miss Aston, notwith-  
 standing the great assurance she had ac-  
 quir'd, blush'd at Mrs. Ramsden's reproof,  
 and said, " Lord ! well, I believe I might  
 be in the wrong ; but I could no more  
 help doing it, than I can help liking  
 you, even while you tease me. But  
 don't you imagine that Mr. Freem  
 C 2 " would

" would have behaved otherwise if he  
 " had loved me passionately?" " No,"  
 replied Mrs. Ramsden; " I think his  
 " whole behaviour gave a delicate proof  
 " of the sincerity of his passion: and you  
 " are, in my opinion, very happy in pos-  
 " sessing the heart of so amiable a man."  
 " Pshaw, pshaw," cried she, " I don't  
 " believe he has the least idea of love. I  
 " would not give a pinch of snuff for a  
 " man who would not be ready to hang  
 " or drown himself whenever I am out  
 " of humour with him." " Why then,  
 " I think," said Charlotte gravely, " you  
 " never deserve to have a lover at all, if  
 " those are your real sentiments." " Nay,  
 " now my dear Miss Egerton," said Mrs.  
 Ramsden, laughing, " you are too severe  
 " upon her." " Indeed," said Miss Aston,  
 " you are a couple of prudes, and I am  
 " half dead with the vapours by listening  
 " to you; so your servant: but remem-  
 " ber, Mrs. Ramsden," continued she  
 laughing, " that I expect you will fix our  
 " party when you have consulted your  
" h—usband."  
 blue 2

" h—usband." She then left them. Mr. Ramsden soon after came in, and agreed with pleasure to accompany them with his lively cousin to the opera.

As Miss Aston was to call her friends, they did not go to the Hay-market till the first act was near over; for she always chose to go late, in order to be taken more notice of. They were scarcely seated when a lady dress'd quite in the French taste, came into one of the side-boxes. Charlotte immediately recollect'd her once-lov'd lady Tiers, and whisper'd to Mrs. Ramsden; upon which Miss Aston fancying she wanted to know who the lady was, very freely informed her. " She  
 " married about a year ago," said she,  
 " a young fellow for love, who has almost  
 " spent her fortune by this time; not but  
 " that she has had her share of it. She  
 " is the most fantastical creature breath-  
 " ing. She lay in of a girl some weeks  
 " ago, who is sent down fifty miles off  
 " to nurse; nay, people don't scruple to  
 " say, that Sir Francis is not the father;

" For all the town knows her." Charlotte, who was sorry to hear one whom she had once so much esteemed, so lightly spoken of, said, " I hope, Miss Aston, you are under a mistake about a lady, whose gaiety of disposition might lead her into improprieties, and make her suspected of faults she has not committed. Besides, public reports are never to be depended on." " You are a most charitable creature," cried Miss Aston ; " but I know what I say is fact : I had it from a young lady who was one of her greatest intimates, till she grew quite scandalous."

Tho' lady Tiers's behaviour did not lessen the veracity of this speech, yet Charlotte was loth to believe every part of it : She would, indeed, have been better pleased if her ladyship had not been present ; because she occasioned her to remember a great many disagreeable occurrences which made her thoughtful for the rest of the evening.

Just before the end of the last act, Mr. Frankly came into the house, and paid his compliments to Charlotte and her party. She thought he look'd uncommonly serious, and when he handed her out, cou'd not help asking the cause of his gravity. "Don't be too much alarmed, I beseech you," said he; "your father is very ill. He was seized with a paralytic fit about an hour after you left him." Charlotte was excessively uneasy at this news and communicated it to Mrs. Ramsden; but begg'd to be excused going home with her. She then order'd a chair, and Frankly offer'd to be her guard.

SHE found her father much worse than she expected. He was attended by a physician, and a surgeon, who had just bled him; but as his whole side was render'd so suddenly useless, they gave her but small hopes of his recovery. She sat up with him all night; tho' he earnestly begg'd that she would retire to rest, and leave him.

till morning. He even commanded her, when intreaties would not prevail ; but nothing could induce her to leave a father she loved so fondly, even for a moment. Mrs. Ramsden came early in the morning to see her good friend, but was shock'd to find him so ill. She stayed the best part of the day with Charlotte, and endeavoured to comfort her ; Frankly too did every thing in his power to hinder her from being too much afflicted. But Charlotte would not be comforted, tho' her father, notwithstanding the difficulty he felt in speaking, seconded the endeavours of Frankly and Mrs. Ramsden.

A week pass'd in this melancholy way ; nay, he grew rather worse than better : when he was sensible that he could not live many days longer, he begg'd to speak with Charlotte alone. " Sit down by the bed-side, my dear child. The time of my departure from this world approaches very fast ; but I don't dread it.—All my concern is about you.—I want much to speak to you.—Be compos'd, my dear Charlotte, and do not

" not affl<sup>t</sup> yourself about what must un-  
 " avoidably happen. You afflict me by  
 " so doing, more than the thoughts of  
 " death ; for I wish to be releas'd, and  
 " have no desire to live a moment lon-  
 " ger, but for my poor child. Yet why  
 " should I give way to an unreasonable  
 " desire ? As we must part, the sooner  
 " we part the better. I have lived to see  
 " you brought up, and to know that you  
 " are good. Always keep so, and then  
 " you will be always happy. 'Tis true,  
 " the fortune you will be mistress of may  
 " subject you to many inconveniences ;  
 " therefore I hope you will fix on a worthy  
 " man to share it with you : such a man  
 " must be happy with one of your dis-  
 " position. I have often wished to see you  
 " well settled ; but now can only com-  
 " fort myself with believing that you are  
 " too prudent to throw your self away on  
 " a person unworthy of you. Once more,  
 " my child, I beg you would not.—I fain  
 " —I fain would endeavour to—to recon-  
 " cile you to our separation ; but, but—  
 He could not proceed ; he could only

shew, by the most affectionate looks how much he was troubled at her concern, and how much he wanted to lessen it. Charlotte threw herself on her knees, and pressing his almost lifeless hand, cried out in broken accents, “ Oh ! my beloved fa-  
 “ ther, what will become of me when you  
 “ are gone ? Speak to me, for heaven’s  
 “ sake. I cannot bear to lose you.” But,  
 finding he struggled in vain to answer  
 her, and was very much altered for the  
 worse, she rose and called for help. The  
 physicians and Mrs. Ramsden, who waited  
 in the next room, immediately came to her  
 assistance : and while the former went to  
 examine their patient, Mrs. Ramsden tried  
 to prevail on her to retire till her father  
 had a little recovered himself. “ O ! Mrs.  
 “ Ramsden,” said she, “ he will never re-  
 “ cover ; he is going, going forever : I have  
 “ no longer a father.” “ My dear,” re-  
 plied Mrs. Ramsden, “ I am sensible that  
 “ he is very ill, but we must not disturb  
 “ him ; let me therefore persuade you to  
 “ go into the next room ; it hurts him  
 “ to see you so much grieved.” “ I can-  
 “ not

" not go," said Charlotte ; " I will not leave him thus." She then approached the bed-side, and found him just able to say, " My dearest child be advised : leave me a little with your friend." She then retired with a heart full of anguish, and left Mrs. Ramsden with her father, whom he intreated, by all their past friendship, to comfort and assist his daughter. " I am going," said he ; " but that poor child must not see it ; the shock will be too much for her to bear. Great God protect my child !" He could scarcely pronounce these words distinctly.

Mrs. Ramsden, finding she could be no longer serviceable to him, return'd to Charlotte, and in about an hour afterwards he departed. While they were in the highest distress and confusion, Mr. Ramsden, who greatly esteemed Mr. Egerton and his daughter, and lov'd his wife too well to be long absent from her, came in. He offer'd Charlotte the use of his house, and begg'd her to withdraw from such a gloomy scene. But she was deaf to all intreaty,

and in a short time, not fit to be remov'd; for the violence of her affliction had thrown her into a fever, by which she was confined to her bed for a month. When she began to recover, they ventured to inform her how her father had left his affairs. In short, he left every thing to her disposal, as she was of age, except a few charitable legacies, and a hundred pounds for mourning to Mr. and Mrs. Ramsden, Mr. Frankly, and one Sir William Rivers, a country-gentleman and old acquaintance, about his own age.

Mrs. Ramsden and Frankly (who still was an assiduous visiter) whenever Charlotte was fit to receive him, managed her affairs. Her spirits were for a long time so much disorder'd, that she was incapable of business; and her physicians, apprehending a consumption, were of opinion that nothing could prevent it but country-air. Sir William Rivers wrote a letter of condolence to her, with a very polite invitation to his house, in which a niece who lived with him join'd; but she was too ill to take

take a long journey, and had indeed no inclination to go to people with whom she was so little acquainted : tho' Mrs. Ramsden thought such a journey, if she had been in health, might have served to amuse her, and remove the lethargy she had fallen into.

CHARLOTTE answer'd Sir William's letter, and, according to her friend's advice, did not absolutely refuse to accept of his invitation, when her health permitted. She then went to a small village near Hamstead, attended by her maid and nurse, and staid there near four months before she could think of returning to London ; and even then could not think of returning to a house where she had lost so valuable a parent and friend. Mrs. Ramsden would have been glad to make room for her, but was deprived of that satisfaction by the arrival of old Mr. Ramsden, who came to stay with his son till he had consulted the best physicians about a disorder which obliged him to take the journey. Charlotte therefore took ready-furnish'd lodgings in  
her

her friend's neighbourhood. The person who lett them was well recommended, and had no-body in the house but a young lady just come out of the country.

**CHARLOTTE** was soon settled in her new apartment, and at Mrs. Ramsden's request, tho' much against her inclination, received the visits of her former acquaintance, among whom Miss Aston and her mama were frequently seen. Mrs. Aston was greatly pleased with Charlotte's prudent behaviour, and Miss was as much delighted with her good humour.

**CHARLOTTE**, tho' she could by no means entirely get rid of Frankly, obliged him to come seldom to her, because she could not avoid being often alone. But she had not that excuse to make long; for Miss Gordon, the young lodger, had attracted the notice of her maid, who thus one morning, while she was dressing, began to prate:

" To be sure, Madam, Miss Gordon is  
 " very melancholy, and no body can think  
 " what's the matter with her. Mrs.  
 " Dolly,

“ Dolly, Mrs. Moore’s maid, says she is  
“ certain she is in love ; for she knows as  
“ how several farmer’s daughters where  
“ she came from in Wiltshire, are just  
“ for all the world like her.” Charlotte  
was at first too much taken up with her  
sorrows to attend to this gossiping speech,  
but a continual repetition of it, and the  
engaging figure of the person to whom it  
related, at length excited her curiosity.  
Being alone one afternoon, and hearing  
that Mrs. Moore, with whom Miss Gordon  
spent a great deal of her time, was gone  
out, she went down into the parlour, and  
surprized the young lady, with a paper in  
her hand, and her eyes full of tears : as she  
was deeply engaged, she did not see Char-  
lotte, who thinking it improper to ad-  
dress a stranger in such a situation, was  
going back again softly ; but, she was  
forced to stop and make an apology for  
disturbing her, by her gown’s catching  
hold of the lock. “ I fear, Madam,” said  
she, “ that I have been guilty of great  
“ rudeness in breaking in upon you so  
“ abruptly, but I heard you were alone,  
“ and

" and came to ask you to drink tea with  
 " me." " You do me a great pleasure,  
 " Madam," replied Miss Gordon, it is I  
 " who ought to make an excuse for be-  
 " ing found in this condition." As she  
 spoke these words very clearly, Char-  
 lotte invited her up stairs, and spent the  
 afternoon with her new visiter, much to  
 her satisfaction ; finding upon a closer ex-  
 amination, that she had been a perfect  
 beauty, and seem'd only to have lost her  
 charms by sickness or fretting ; that she  
 had a fund of good sense, and was tho-  
 roughly well-bred.

~~CHARLOTTE~~ ~~grew indeed so fond of~~  
~~her, that she desired her to come and sit~~  
~~with her often, and Miss Gordon readily~~  
~~consented, only begging the favour of her~~  
~~not to admit any other visiter, because~~  
~~she chose to be private, for particular~~  
~~reasons.~~ These reasons Charlotte very  
 much long'd to know, but could not  
 handsomely ask for an explanation. One  
 afternoon, however, Mr. Frankly's sud-  
 den entrance, without first sending up his  
 name,

hame, as usual, disconcerted Miss Gordon so much, that it occasioned a very unexpected discovery. She was standing at a table in the dining-room, with her back to the door, when he entered the room, but upon hearing his step, walked on to the chamber without turning her face towards him, and shut the door hastily. Frankly, who saw her quit the room as he entered, made an apology to Charlotte for his intrusion, and hoped he had not frightened away her company. "Why," said Charlotte, "I believe you have: for that lady will not be seen by any of my friends. However, I'll try if I can prevail on her to return and honour you with her presence." She then went to Miss Gordon, designing to rally her for leaving her alone with a man, but was extremely surprized to find her in tears, very pale, and almost ready to faint. She ran to her, and demanded the cause of her uneasiness; offered to stay with her, and let Mr. Frankly know that she was taken ill. Miss Gordon said, "she was often in that condition, and would stay in

" in her own apartment till Mr. Frankly  
" was gone, and then return to spend the  
" evening with her." Charlotte, obliged  
to be content, returned to Frankly, who  
was pleased to find her alone, and took  
that opportunity to give some distant  
hints of the great regard he continued to  
have for her, and the happiness he should  
enjoy, if she would determine in his fa-  
vour. Charlotte answered him with her  
accustomed freedom. " I shall always be  
" ready," said she, " to own my obli-  
" gations to you, but never able to re-  
" turn them in the manner you seem to  
" wish. It would be much better, there-  
" fore, Mr. Frankly, I should think, if  
" you are not satisfied with my behaviour  
" to you, to visit me seldomer, and to  
" look out for some more deserving wo-  
" man, who will reward your merit and  
" affiduities." " I am greatly obliged to  
" you, Madam," said he, " for that  
" charming openness of temper, and for  
" your kind advice. But I do not know  
" a more deserving woman, nor ever ex-  
" pect to find one." " You must not  
" think,"

" think," cried Charlotte, " to make me  
" believe that you lived till you became  
" acquainted with me, without finding  
" one. I am well assured that I am not  
" the first woman you have followed."

" You are not, Madam, I confess, but  
" by all that's good, I knew only one  
" besides yourself, whom I thought worth  
" more than a moment's notice." " You  
" are very satirical," said Charlotte, " but  
" you make me curious to know what  
" became of that one lady." " She died,  
" Madam," replied he, " and left me  
" for some time the most unhappy of  
" men." " Then you were married or  
" engaged, I suppose, said she. But I  
" fear I grow too impertinent, about a sub-  
" ject which cannot concern me." " So  
" far from it, Madam," replied he, " that  
" I have long wished to mention the sub-  
" ject to you, but my heart was always too  
" full. Pardon, Miss Egerton, my sorrow,  
" for one indeed most worthy of it; you  
" cannot, I am sure, esteem me no less  
" for it; nay, I believe, you would have  
" esteemed me more, had you known the  
" dear injured object I lament. But this  
" is

“ is a very uncommon way of entertain-  
“ ing the only person who can succeed  
“ her in my heart.” “ No apologies,  
“ Sir, I should be glad to hear some-  
“ thing more of the dear injured object,  
“ if 'tis not improper.” “ You shall  
“ know, Madam,” said he, “ all that I  
“ know relating to her.”

“ ABOUT seven years ago my father,  
“ being in an indifferent state of health,  
“ was ordered by his physicians to Scar-  
“ borough, and I went with him. As  
“ there was a great deal of company, of  
“ both sexes, which suited the gaiety of  
“ my disposition, I spent my time very  
“ agreeably at that place, especially among  
“ the ladies, tho' I took care not to be  
“ particular in my addresses to any one,  
“ having a violent aversion to marriage.  
“ This aversion displeased my father, who  
“ was continually proposing matches to  
“ me. There happened to be then at  
“ Scarborough a very agreeable girl, who  
“ had a handsome fortune of her own,  
“ and stood a good chance to enjoy the  
“ estates

" estates of two rich uncles, with whom  
" she lived. This lady my father pitched  
" upon for me, and all the objections that  
" I could make to her, signified nothing.  
" I did not indeed much dislike her, but  
" could not bring myself to give up my  
" liberty. While my father was per-  
" suading me to play a sure game (as he  
" phrased it) there arrived an elderly lady  
" from Scotland, accompanied by a young  
" one, the charmingest creature I ever  
" beheld. In short, I gazed at her till I  
" was no longer master of my heart. As  
" she frequented the rooms I soon became  
" acquainted with her ; and then was  
" happy enough to find that her inward  
" perfections were equal if not superior  
" to her outward charms. I was also  
" happy enough to make myself agree-  
" able to her ; nay more, to make my self  
" beloved as fondly as I loved. You  
" may easily suppose, Madam, that I ne-  
" glected the lady about whom I was be-  
" fore so indifferent, and attach'd myself  
" closely to my amiable Fanny. My fa-  
" ther grew extremely out of humour,  
" and

" and hasten'd to London much sooner  
 " than he intended. I was not uneasy at  
 " his departure, as Fanny and her god-  
 " mother set out about the same time.

" As soon as I came to town, I went  
 " to her house, not doubting but that the  
 " figure I made, and the intimacy I had  
 " contracted with them at Scarborough,  
 " were sufficient for my introduction to  
 " a girl who had nothing but her god-  
 " mother's favour to depend upon (as  
 " my father had informed me.) But I  
 " was mistaken; the old lady absolutely  
 " refused to admit me, unless I came with  
 " my father's approbation, which I could  
 " not by any means obtain. I grew wea-  
 " ry of importuning him, and at last only  
 " declared, that I would never marry at  
 " all. He seemed for a time satisfied  
 " with this declaration, and I enjoy'd as  
 " many private meetings as I could with  
 " my dear Fanny, under a feign'd name,  
 " at the house of a trusty confidant. I  
 " pressed her to consent to a private mar-  
 " riage, but never could meet with suc-

cess : the only reason the generous girl  
 gave against it was her immoderate  
 fondness for me, which would not per-  
 mit her to incense my father against  
 me. In vain did I assure her that he  
 should never know of our transactions.  
 She always denied my request, and told  
 me I could not mention any thing that  
 would give her more uneasiness. Our  
 passions were raised to so high a pitch,  
 by having such frequent opportunities  
 to indulge them, that they knew no  
 bounds, nor indeed did I endeavour to  
 curb them, hoping that I should at  
 length induce her to act as I pleas'd.  
 We continued our secret interviews for  
 above a year ; when my father, hav-  
 ing got scent of them, reviv'd his intrea-  
 ties, with regard to the young lady al-  
 ready mention'd, (who, he said, was  
 desperately in love with me) but I paid  
 so little regard to them, that, at last, he  
 threaten'd to disinherit me. But his  
 threatening had no other effect than to  
 make me absent my self from the house,  
 and attach myself closer to Fanny, whom

" look'd upon as my wife. She had penetration enough to know that something made me uneasy, and pressed me very much to tell her what it was. I resisted a good while, because she was not in a condition to be alarmed ; but repeated her intreaties with such earnestness, that I was forced to comply. She heard me with a composure that surprized me, and urged me to seek a reconciliation with my father, and yield to his request : assuring me at the same time, that she loved me too fondly to ruin my fortune. I told her, she was dearer to me than my fortune ; and again offer'd to marry her ; but her obstinacy was immovable.

" WHILE we were in this situation her godmother died, and left her enough for a decent support, with frugal management. I again told my father how fondly I doated on her, and assured him that the objection he made was luckily removed, and that she had got a very handsome fortune ; but he was

" too

" too well informed of her affairs, and  
 " flung from me with contempt, declar-  
 " ing he never would see me if I did not  
 " quit her entirely, and accept of the lady  
 " he propos'd. I made no answer to him,  
 " but flew to the arms of my dearest  
 " girl for relief. Guess my surprize and  
 " vexation, Miss Egerton; to find she  
 " was not at her lodgings; to find only  
 " a letter on her dressing-table, wherein  
 " she begg'd me not to think of her, but  
 " obey my father; and inform'd me that  
 " she had particular reasons for going  
 " away so suddenly.

" I w a s very much concern'd at  
 " her leaving me in this manner; and  
 " more so, as she neither mention'd the  
 " place she was gone to, nor how long  
 " she intended to conceal herself. I in-  
 " quired of the people of the house, but  
 " to no purpose; they could only tell me,  
 " that she and her maid went away in a  
 " hackney-coach. I waited about a week  
 " with the greatest impatience, expecting  
 " every day to hear from her. I grew  
 VOL. II. D " weary

" weary of uncertainty, and began to think  
 " that she might be gone to a sister, whom  
 " I knew she had in the country ; and  
 " accordingly wrote to her. Just when  
 " I was going to send my letter to the  
 " post, my servant brought one from her  
 " maid. I hastily open'd it, and the  
 " first words I saw were these : " My  
 " dear mistress died last night." I could  
 " read no more. The letter drop'd out  
 " of my hand, and with it a paper fold-  
 " ed up and address'd to me, which, as  
 " soon as I was a little recovered, I found  
 " to be written by my dear girl : it con-  
 " tained the warmest expressions of ten-  
 " derness, and concluded with entreating  
 " me, for her sake, to comply with my  
 " father's desires, and wishing me the  
 " greatest happiness this world can af-  
 " ford. I was so lost in sorrow for a long  
 " time, that I could only dwell on the  
 " dear paper ; but afterwards I took up  
 " the maid's letter, in which I read the  
 " following lines : " My mistress retir-  
 " ed into the country, for the sake of  
 " lying-in privately ; and concealed the

" place from you, in hopes that you  
 " would return to your father when you  
 " could not find her any where. She de-  
 " signed to spend the remainder of her  
 " life in retirement, but a violent fever  
 " seiz'd her soon after her arrival. She  
 " had only time to write the inclosed to  
 " you before she grew delirious: three  
 " days after which she died."

" **Nobody**, Miss Egerton, was more  
 " sensible of grief, than I was at that mo-  
 " ment. I had lost the sweetest, the most  
 " endearing of her sex; one who spent  
 " her whole life in studying to please me,  
 " and concerting schemes for my happi-  
 " ness. We never had the slightest dif-  
 " ference; she lov'd me but too well.  
 " Had she been less anxious about my for-  
 " tune, we might have been at this time  
 " blest in each other. I believe the un-  
 " easiness which my father's obstinacy  
 " gave her, hasten'd her death." " Your  
 " Fanny," said Charlotte, " was indeed  
 " the most generous creature I ever heard  
 " of. But did you never see the servant

“ afterwards ?” “ Never,” replied he,  
“ tho’ I made the strictest inquiries con-  
“cerning her ; for I wish’d to hear  
“ every particular of my amiable girl’s  
“ behaviour. Poor Fanny, how dearly  
“ didst thou pay for knowing me ?” “ But  
“ pray,” interrupted Charlotte, “ how  
“ did your father behave when he heard  
“ of her death ?” “ Much better, Ma-  
“dam,” said he, “ than I expected ; he  
“ kindly soothed my sorrow and forbore  
“ to mention matrimony, till he saw I  
“ had in some measure regain’d my chear-  
“fulness : then he made another propo-  
“sal with regard to the same lady ; but I  
“ rejected it with disdain, telling him,  
“ that I could never look on her but as  
“ the destroyer of my first and dearest  
“ love. He laugh’d at my romantic no-  
“tions, as he call’d them : “ But since  
“ you are not going to degrade yourself,”  
“ said he, “ I shall let you alone. You  
“ will in time, perhaps, change your  
“ mind and think better.” He was how-  
“ever mistaken ; for during his life I  
“ continually mourned in secret the death  
“ of

" of my dearest Fanny, and could not  
 " think favourably of any other woman  
 " till I met with you." Here Frankly  
 was prevented from going on, by the  
 sprightly voice of Miss Aston, who came  
 to ask Charlotte if she would make a  
 party to Ranelagh the following morn-  
 ing; and seeing Frankly with her in a  
 very grave humour, began to rally her,  
 " Lord, my dear," said she, " what have  
 " you been doing to poor Frankly? In  
 " short, he looks as if you had beaten  
 " him; but I hope he will recover time  
 " enough to attend us to Ranelagh; for  
 " you shall go positively." " I am not  
 " so positively sure of that as you are,  
 " my dear Miss Aston," said Charlotte  
 smiling. " Oh, but you must not re-  
 " fuse," replied she; " for Mrs. Ra[n]-  
 " den and I are to be gallanted by Mr.  
 " Freemer. I long to have your opi-  
 " nion of him. He is the politest lover—  
 " I'll tell you what, my dear—Lord! no,  
 " I can't tell you before Frankly; tho'  
 " he has such a hanging look, I swear I  
 " believe he has catch'd it of my swain.

“ And he is a precious one, I assure you  
“ —you shall be acquainted with him.”  
“ Why, I confess” replied Charlotte, “ I  
“ have some inclination to see Mr. Free-  
“ mer ; but can’t I see him without go-  
“ ing to Ranelagh ? You know I don’t  
“ love public places.” “ Well now, that’s  
“ astonishing,” cried Miss Aston ; for I  
“ doat on them ; and indeed I am never  
“ happy when I am any where else : but  
“ you are a strange girl.” “ I can’t see  
“ any room for such astonishment,” cried  
Charlotte ; “ there is nothing so common  
“ as difference of taste, and we may as  
“ well be surprized that our faces are not a-  
“ like.” “ Then you don’t really stay at  
“ home, because ’tis prudent, decent, and  
“ all that,” said Miss Aston ; “ but because  
“ you love to be at home. Well now, you  
“ are not half so good a girl as I thought you  
“ were. “ Why, Madam,” replied Frank-  
ly, “ is it less meritorious to act properly  
“ from inclination than compulsion ?”  
“ Ah ! well,” said she, “ don’t begin to  
“ reason about it ; for I hate reasoning,  
“ that’s so like my mama — if you did  
“ but

“ but know how many lessons I am teaz’d  
 “ with against gadding and coquetry :  
 “ when there’s no such thing in nature as  
 “ a coquet in this age ; except ’tis a male  
 “ one. No woman has it in her power  
 “ to be one.” “ I must beg your par-  
 “ don, Miss Aston,” cried Frankly, “ I  
 “ think I know several.” “ Do you sin-  
 “ cerely,” cried she? “ Oh! tell me where  
 “ they are to be found that I may go and  
 “ learn by what happy arts they triumph  
 “ over you lordly insulters ? Could I but  
 “ once make Freemer sensible of my power,  
 “ I believe I could bring myself to marry  
 “ the creature. But I positively will ne-  
 “ ver be a slave, till I have first had the  
 “ pleasure of making one. Well, I’ll bid  
 “ you adieu till tomorrow ; for you’re  
 “ all so monstrously serious, that I shall  
 “ be infected too if I stay much longer.”

Charlotte, who was impatient to inquire  
 after Miss Gordon, did not endeavour to  
 detain her. Frankly soon followed her,  
 when she told him she had letters to write.  
 She then ran to Miss Gordon, whom she  
 found in great disorder, and insisted on

being acquainted with the cause of it.

“ Miss Egerton,” (said she, holding both her hands and looking earnestly in her face) “ I am going to make a discovery on which the happiness of my future life depends : and you are the person whose advice and assistance I stand most in need of.” Charlotte was amaz’d at the wildness of her looks, and the air with which she spoke, but assured her she might depend on her best endeavours.

“ I do believe you,” cried she ; “ but must entreat you first to answer me one question with the utmost sincerity. Are you absolutely determin’d never to marry Frankly ?” “ I am,” said Charlotte.

“ Have yet a moment’s patience with me—Is he indifferent to you ?” “ Quite indifferent as a lover : as a man who has perhaps preserved my honour and my life, I esteem him ; but no farther. Then,” said she, “ in me behold the once-lov’d, once-happy Fanny, sister to your friend Mrs. Ramsden—”

“ Good Heavens !” cried Charlotte, “ is it possible !—but where have you con-

“ ceal’d

“ ceal’d yourself so long, and for what  
 “ reason ?” “ You have heard Frankly’s  
 “ relation,” said she, “ and the occasion  
 “ of my going into the country ; there-  
 “ fore I need only tell you where I went,  
 “ and what adventures I have met with  
 “ since.”

“ HAVING settled all my little affairs,  
 “ by my servants assistance, I set out for  
 “ a village in a private part of Hampshire,  
 “ where her friends lived, and with them  
 “ I pass’d for a widow who had just lost  
 “ her husband. There I was in a few  
 “ weeks delivered of a daughter. When  
 “ I was up again, I could not help mak-  
 “ ing reflections on my forlorn condition,  
 “ and the injury I should do both myself  
 “ and Mr. Frankly, by returning to him ;  
 “ for I could not bear the thoughts of  
 “ making him run the risque of being  
 “ disinherited by marrying me ; nor of  
 “ living with him in the manner I had  
 “ done. These reflections determin’d me  
 “ to send the letter he read to you, in-  
 “ closed in that which I obliged my maid

“ to write, to inform him of my death. I  
“ would have given the world to know how  
“ he receiv'd the news ; but durst not in-  
“ quire for fear of being discovered, either  
“ by him or my sister ; for I dreaded them  
“ both at that time more than death. As  
“ I had a competency for myself and my  
“ child, I spent my time as agreeably as  
“ I could ; ordering my maid to be very  
“ diligent in her inquiries after Mr. Frank-  
“ ly's family. One day she brought me  
“ word that the father had been dead a  
“ twelvemonth ; and that the son was  
“ unmarried. Upon this news I flatter'd  
“ myself that he might still have some  
“ regard for me, and came to town ; but,  
“ to prevent my being known, took the  
“ name of Gordon, and an apartment in  
“ this house : sending my servant with the  
“ child to the part of the town where he  
“ lived, in order to learn every thing con-  
“ cerning him. I was soon inform'd that  
“ he made his addresses to you ; and, to  
“ say the truth, Miss Egerton was exces-  
“ sively shock'd at the news. I almost  
“ blam'd him as much as if he had known

“ I

" I was alive : but, on recollecting in what  
 " manner I had acted, I found I had no-  
 " thing to do but to retire, and live alto-  
 " gether in obscurity. So great however  
 " was my weakness, that I could not think  
 " of leaving the town without once seeing  
 " the man I still loved so fondly ; tho' I  
 " was convinced, it was the only prudent  
 " step I could take. My maid pressed  
 " me either to send for him, or to write  
 " to him ; being thoroughly satisfied that  
 " if he knew I was living, he would break  
 " through all engagements to be mine for  
 " ever. But I had heard too much of  
 " man's inconstancy to believe her. While  
 " I was in this perplexing situation, you  
 " took these apartments : and I soon heard  
 " you was the lady I had so much reason  
 " to fear ; yet I discovered, the moment  
 " I beheld you, something so striking in  
 " your manner, that I could not help  
 " being prepossessed in your favour, and  
 " should have sought your acquain-  
 " tance had not you kindly made the  
 " first advances. I have indeed avoided  
 " Mr. Frankly (being afraid to trust my-

" self with him) ever since I lodged here ;  
 " and therefore his coming this afternoon  
 " greatly disconcerted me. I knew his  
 " step, and hurried into your chamber. I  
 " was very glad you left me there, for  
 " jealousy and love both strongly prompt-  
 " ed me to listen to the conversation be-  
 " tween you. Little did I think of hear-  
 " ing my own sad story. But what trans-  
 " ports did I feel when he expressed his  
 " concern for the loss of me ! O Miss  
 " Egerton, pity and excuse a heart whose  
 " only failing is too much sensibility. I  
 " thought, before he came, that it was  
 " most eligible never to see him again,  
 " but I now find that love is too power-  
 " ful for reason. Do not betray me, but  
 " give me your advice.

" Be comforted, Madam," said Char-  
 lotte, " I will endeavour to bring about a  
 " re-union ; but we must act cautiously :  
 " be assur'd, I will do my utmost, both  
 " for your own sake, and my dear Mr.  
 " Ramsden's. I must see your daughter :  
 " she may be of infinite use in our affair."

" You

“ You shall command us both,” replied the now-satisfied Fanny : “ but how shall I look upon my dear sister again ?” “ I think,” said Charlotte, “ Mrs. Ramsden should not be let into the secret till you are married to Frankly, or till every thing is quite settled. Compose yourself to-night, and let me have the child to-morrow. I design to put off my engagement with Miss Aston, who will insist upon taking your sister, and then I shall have Frankly to myself.” Miss Calden was full of acknowledgments to Charlotte for undertaking the management of her affairs, and wished her a good night. In the morning she order’d her maid to bring the little Fanny to breakfast. Charlotte receiv’d her with the greatest tenderness, and was playing with her when Frankly came to wait on her to Ranelagh. “ I don’t intend, Mr. Frankly,” said she, “ to go this morning, but should be glad of your company to help me to entertain this little visiter, if you have no aversion to children.” “ I am particularly fond of them,” said he ; “ and this visiter ”

“ of

" of yours seems to be excessively agreeable." She is indeed a sweet pratler," replied Charlotte, " and I fancy you will be more pleased, when you are better acquainted with her." " What is your name, my dear," said he to the child? " Her name is Fanny," said Charlotte. " And who is your papa and mama, Miss Fanny?" said he. " I have no papa," cried the charming innocent; " and ma-ma's name is Fanny too." " She has a father," said Charlotte; " but he is not so happy as to know her; for which reason I pity him." " He is indeed to be pitied," said Frankly: " what an infinite deal of pleasure must he lose? But how was he divided from so lovely a child? Does her mother live with him? Pray, Madam, may I be favoured with their histories?" " I can't tell," said Charlotte, smiling; " it is a very odd one, and bears a near resemblance to that which you related yesterday." " Good God!" cried he; " are there more people so unhappily circumstanced as I have been? If there are, I know how to pity them. " Who

" do

" do you think," said Charlotte, " de-  
 " serves the greatest compassion ; the man  
 " who lives in ignorance of the sweetest  
 " child and its amiable mother ; or the  
 " poor mother who is torn from all she  
 " loved, and hourly pines to be united to  
 " the father of her dear infant ? " " The  
 " mother is certainly," said he, " the  
 " most pitiable object ; because you say,  
 " the father knows not that he is possest  
 " of two such blessings." " 'Tis true,"  
 said Charlotte ; " but he would not long  
 " remain in ignorance, if the mother had  
 " courage enough to venture a discovery,  
 " and was not doubtful of her fate. " Their  
 " separation then, Madam, must have  
 " been of a very extraordinary nature.  
 " My curiosity is raised : will you not  
 " gratify it ? " " You are very impa-  
 " tient," cried she ; " but I will not keep  
 " you long in suspense. I have indeed  
 " undertaken a difficult task : it is to  
 " bring this pretty child acquainted with  
 " its father. As a great deal of delicacy  
 " is requisite on such an occasion, I should  
 " be glad of advice ; for I am somewhat

" at

“ at a loss how to act, and know no-  
“ body more capable of giving it than  
“ yourself, Sir.” “ I did not expect such  
“ a compliment from Miss Egerton,”  
said he ; “ but I believe you will readily  
“ agree with me, Madam, that I cannot  
“ give my opinion till I hear the case.”  
“ I don’t so readily agree with you,”  
said she ; “ you need only tell me how  
“ you would receive your once-lov’d Fan-  
“ ny with just such a daughter, and then  
“ I shall be able to form some judgment  
“ of that person’s disposition whom I could  
“ influence in favour of his unknown, va-  
“ luable relations.” “ Good heaven ! ”  
cried Frankly, “ how you distress me,  
“ Madam ! the remembrance of my dear  
“ Fanny is too affecting ? She might,  
“ have been, perhaps, the mother of as  
“ lovely a child, and we might have been  
“ happy together.” “ Could you be now  
“ happy,” said she, “ were your Fanny  
“ living ? ” “ O, how needless,” replied  
he, “ is that question ? Were she still  
“ living, did you say ? Yes, Madam, I  
“ should be happy indeed, and would fly  
“ with

“ with exftasy to make her mine for ever:  
“ But I must not hope for—and yet your  
“ words and looks make me fancy strange  
“ things ; they almost persuade me to  
“ think that this beauteous child belongs  
“ to me.” “ She does indeed belong to  
“ you,” said Charlotte, presenting her  
to him. “ This is the daughter of  
“ your Fanny.” Frankly embraced his  
child in the most affectionate manner :  
“ But where,” said he, “ is her mother ;  
“ for you have half-assur’d me that she  
“ too is living ?” When he had spoken  
these words, Miss Calden (who waited in  
the chamber till Charlotte gave a sign) en-  
tered the room. ’Tis impossible to de-  
scribe the transports they both felt at this  
meeting. Frankly a thousand times press’d  
his long-lost Fanny to his bosom, and  
vow’d she should soon be his wife. When  
the first fallies of their joy were over, they  
join’d in most sincerely thanking Char-  
lotte, for being so luckily the cause of  
their re-union. They then consulted her  
about fixing their wedding-day, and intro-  
ducing them to Mrs. Ramsden ; “ I  
“ think,”

" think," said Charlotte, " you will be  
" introduced with a better grace to that  
" lady after the ceremony is over ; and,  
" as for the day, I leave you to fix it."  
" Well then, Miss Egerton," said Frank-  
ly, " add one favour to those you have  
" already confer'd ; that is, be present at  
" the ceremony tomorrow morning. I  
" will go and provide every thing neces-  
" sary, and leave my dear Fanny, and  
" our little one, to your friendly care till  
" my return." Charlotte readily consent-  
ed, and told him she would be denied all  
day. He went accordingly and returned  
to dinner. The next morning Charlotte  
accompanied her friends to Church with a  
cousin of Frankly's, who gave Fanny  
away, and whom she invited to dine with  
them. In the afternoon the cousin took  
his leave. When he was gone, Miss Aſ-  
ton and Mrs. Ramsden ſent in their names.  
Charlotte then desir'd her new-married  
friends to ſtay in their chamber till ſhe  
called them, and prepared to receive her  
visitors alone. Miss Aſton, as ſoon as ſhe  
came in, rallied her for being at home only  
to

to Frankly, and for disappointing her at Ranelagh. Mrs. Ramsden could not help telling her there was something particular in her conduct. She replied, laughing, " Why, my dear Mrs. Ramsden and my dear Miss Aston, if you will not be too censorious, I will confess that he is now in my chamber." " Well," cried Miss Aston, " pray never chide me again, Mrs. Ramsden ; you always told me Miss Charlotte was such a pattern—but these sober-looking folks may do any thing, while we lively girls are only suspected.—And so, I suppose," continued she to Charlotte, " he is not to be let out till I am gone." " He is not indeed," said Charlotte, looking archly, " Then," said she, " I'll be gone this instant ; for I hate mortally to spoil sport : so farewell till you and your lover have settled it."—

MRS. RAMSDEN was now left alone with Charlotte, and began to think there was some mystery in her behaviour. Charlotte soon unraveled it. " I have a great

" many

" many excuses to make to you, Mrs.  
 " Ramsden, said she, for depriving you so  
 " long of the highest of all satisfactions;  
 " the sight of a friend, after a tedious ab-  
 " sence. But I only delay the meeting in  
 " order to enhance the pleasure of it."  
 " I have not understood you all day,  
 " child," said Mrs. Ramsden; " nor can  
 " I possibly conceive your present mean-  
 " ing." " I am sorry," said she, " that  
 " I am so obscure; but I have a lady  
 " within, whom perhaps, you may under-  
 " stand better." She then called Mrs.  
 Frankly.

IF Mrs. Ramsden was surprized before,  
 how much more so was she to see her sister,  
 who advanc'd to meet her, not without a  
 little confusion, and endeavour'd to make  
 some apologies for her long absence: but  
 Mrs. Ramsden put a stop to them by em-  
 bracing her most affectionately, and assur-  
 ing her she wanted nothing but to know  
 she was well and happy, to make her com-  
 pleatley so. " I am both well and happy,  
 " my dear sister," replied she, " thanks  
     " to

" to Miss Egerton ; but I have a little  
 " stranger to present to you, whose papa,  
 " I believe, you are well acquainted with." Frankly then led in the child, and Mrs. Ramsden received her niece very fondly.  
 " But all these unexpected events," said she, " amaze me, and I am eager to know  
 " in what manner they were brought  
 " about. " You shall soon be inform'd,  
 " my dear sister," replied Mrs. Frankly ;  
 " but as I hear I have a very amiable  
 " brother, I beg he may be sent for first." Mrs. Ramsden, who had a sincere regard  
 for her husband, consented to defer the gratification of her curiosity till his arrival ; when they all spent the evening with Charlotte.

AFTER supper, Mr. Frankly took his wife and child to his own house, where his servants were prepared to receive him.

CHARLOTTE, when her company was gone, retired to her pillow, in a humour very different from many of our modern young ladies ; rejoicing that she had contributed

tributed to the felicity of two deserving persons, tho' at the expence of an agreeable lover.

CHARLOTTE now spent the greatest part of her time with the agreeable sisters, who would have made any person of an envious disposition very uneasy; for never were there two women more happily married. But she rejoiced at their felicity, and only wished—that Welford had been true: for she could not help preferring him to all the men she had met with. Wishing, however, is a great enemy to good-humour, and might have prey'd too much on her spirits, had not the lively Miss Aston engaged her in a variety of new scenes. This young lady, despairing also of finding a lover who would answer her romantic expectations, condescended at last to please her papa and mama by taking Mr. Freemer. The latter end of the ensuing summer was fix'd for the wedding, and Charlotte and Mrs. Ramsden were earnestly entreated to give them their company at Aston-park: they consented; but

" just

just before Mr. Aston's family proposed to leave the town, old Mr. Ramsden's disorders increas'd so much, that his son and daughter could not think of undertaking a journey. Charlotte was therefore prevailed upon to go without them. Before she set out for Aston-park, Sir William Rivers arriv'd and solicited her to spend a month with him in Sussex so pressingly, that her friends advised her to accept of his invitation; as he was an old acquaintance of her father's, liv'd not above twelve miles from the park, and promised to deliver her to them at the end of the month. She accordingly set out with the old knight in his post chaise, after taking an affectionate farewell of Mrs. Ramsden. Sir William behaved, during the journey, with great politeness, and they were welcom'd at their arrival by his niece, Miss Smith, and his only son,

YOUNG Rivers was handsome, and thoroughly vers'd in all those polite arts which are too often level'd against innocence

cence with success. But, tho' his triumphs over innocence had been numerous, he was so dextrous a hypocrite, that he bore the character of a decent gentleman. 'Twas for this son, Sir William so eagerly press'd Charlotte to go into the country with him, hoping that his person and address would win her affections, and not doubting but that his schemes would succeed, as she was at full liberty to dispose of herself and her fortune.

RIVERS at first only paid her great respect, and studied to procure her all kinds of amusement. They visited every place of note within twenty miles of them. In one of those excursions, as they were passing thro' a little village, they saw so great a crowd assembled, that Charlotte express'd a desire to know the occasion of it. Upon which Rivers ordered the coach to stop. They soon found a young woman disputing with a large fat man : many of the mob were on her side, and one of them informed the company in the coach, that "the man was an ale-house keeper, " and

" and owner of a small hut, in which the  
 " young woman lived with her grand-  
 " mother, aged near ninety, and a nurse-  
 " child. That their poor neighbour owed  
 " her noisy landlord forty shillings for rent;  
 " but, as she was not able to pay it, he was  
 " going to seize the few moveables she  
 " had, and turn her out of doors, tho' she  
 " was at this time very ill." Charlotte,  
 who always sympathiz'd with the unhappy,  
 offer'd to pay the money, and intreat-  
 ed Miss Smith to go with her to the old  
 woman, who the people assured her was  
 a great object of charity. They accord-  
 ingly enter'd her hut, followed by her  
 grand-daughter, and found a figure scarce-  
 ly human, being doubly oppressed, with  
 poverty and age; but there was a fine  
 child upon her knee, about a year old.  
 When the young woman told her grand-  
 mother of Charlotte's bounty, she lifted  
 up her hands in amazement, and said,  
 " You are surely a good creature indeed;  
 " if you had not comed this way I and  
 " this poor thing, which I hope was born  
 " to see better days, mought have pe-

“ risht thro’ want.” “ Whose child is it?”  
cried Charlotte. “ Aye, Lord bless us,”  
said she; “ its mother is a much finer  
“ Madam than you; tho’ not a quarter  
“ so good. All is not gold that glistens,  
“ you know. She is called my lady Ti-  
“ ers.” “ Lady Tiers?” said Charlotte.  
“ Sure you are mistaken. How came  
“ her child here?” “ No, no, Madam,  
“ I beent mistaken, tho’ I am old and  
“ poor; I have my wits still, thank  
“ the Lord. ’Tis indeed, her daughter;  
“ an’t you, my pretty little Bell? but I’ll  
“ tell you, Madam: One day my lady  
“ and her maid happen’d to pass by my  
“ door, where I sat spinning, and as I knew  
“ Mrs. Jenny, for I was once a farvant  
“ myself, she stopp’d and ask’d me if I  
“ would take a child to nurse, when Ma-  
“ dam was brought to bed? I who was  
“ willing to get a small matter in an ho-  
“ nest way, said yes; and wanted sadly  
“ to make a bargain for four shillings a  
“ week; but Madam haggled very much,  
“ and beat me down to three. In six  
“ weeks afterwards the baby was brought,

“ and

" and a fine baby she is, God bless her !  
 " but I have never receiv'd a shilling from  
 " that time to this. Some folks say she  
 " is gone beyōnd sea."

CHARLOTTE was excessively shock'd at this account, which was attested by the young woman and a crowd of neighbours, and, kissing the child, told the old woman that, if she was willing and able to take care of it, she would pay her the full price. She then gave her a guinea to begin with, stept into the coach, and continued her journey amidst the shouts of the people, who declared she was the best young lady they had ever seen in all their born days : But neither Rivers nor Miss Smith seemed to be really delighted with this excess of generosity, tho' they applauded it. The latter was very much reserved all the time she was at Sir William's, and therefore could not be suitable to her : and the assiduities of the former grew exceeding troublesome ; for, before the month was expir'd, he took an opportunity to make an offer of his heart to her, which she refused

fused as politely as she could, but determined never to visit the knight and his family again. Sir William, who seconded his son's addresses with great eagerness, said every thing in his power to persuade Charlotte to receive them, but to no purpose : she claimed his promise to carry her to Aston-park. However, before she set out, she contriv'd to see the little Bell, and charged the young woman to take particular care of her if her grandmother should be disabled by sickness, or death.

CHARLOTTE was received at Aston-park with a great deal of pleasure. Sir William with his son and his niece, accompanied her, as they wanted to make an acquaintance with the family there. Mr. Freeimer set out just before their arrival, for Shropshire, in order to prepare every thing for Miss Aston's reception, at the close of the summer: and that young lady, who pined in solitude, and only sighed for company, rejoiced to find so many agreeable new visitors. In short, the visit was soon

soon return'd, and many pleasant tours the two families made about the country : which were better relish'd by Charlotte, because Rivers attach'd himself entirely to Miss Aston, who was highly delighted with an admirer so much more gay than Freemer : and indeed he soon made so great an impression on her, that she seem'd to have forgot her promise to be Mrs. Freemer before the summer was over : and, as her papa and mama were apt to carry their indulgence too far, she was in a fair way of being made unhappy for life, had not Charlotte luckily sav'd her from the snare that was laid for her.

As Rivers was only in pursuit of a large fortune, he was very indifferent about the woman who possessed it. He pretended a violent passion for Miss Aston, but always when they were in private, because he knew she was engaged ; not doubting but that, if he could once fix her affections, her father and mother would be easily enough prevailed on to wink at her disappointing Mr. Freemer, as they were so

doatingly fond of her. But he was forc'd to use all the art he was master of to keep her from exposing both him and herself ; for her vanity would not always suffer her to conceal what she wish'd to make known, the pleasure of triumphing over Charlotte, and all the girls in the country, by letting them see, that so very smart a fellow neglect ed them to dangle after her alone. Instead of spending only days with each other, they had soon an opportuity to be whole weeks together ; for, as Miss Smith and her cousin us'd to make weekly visits to Mr. Afton's family, Miss Aston and Charlotte were fond of returning them.

CHARLOTTE began to like Sir William's seat again, because his son was attach'd to a new object ; and because his niece behav'd to her with more freedom than ever. In the midst of her engagements, however, with the two families, she found means to peep at her little nursery sometimes ; but always went incog. well knowing her sprightly companion's inclination to tattle, and not caring to publish her once-lov'd

Arabella.

Arabella's failing : not even Rivers, nor his cousin imagin'd that Charlotte was acquainted with the mother of the child.

THE last time she call'd she found the young woman in tears, lamenting the loss of her grandmother, who died two days before. Charlotte gave her two guineas, as she had no money to bury her ; and ask'd her if she was capable of taking care of the child ? " I should be very glad," said the girl, " to have it if you will give me leave to carry it into Kent, where I intend to settle with a young man who would have married me before now ; but I could not think of leaving my grandmother in her weak condition." " Why must you leave this place ? " replied Charlotte. " Because, Madam," said she, " his father died lately, and left him a small farm there." Charlotte was so pleas'd with the girl's kindness to her grandmother, that she consented to let her have the child, on her promising to leave word with the neighbours where she was gone, in case

any person should enquire after it. She then took her direction, gave her something towards house-keeping, and return'd to Sir William's, where he had left Miss Afton.

As Charlotte was always an early riser, especially in the country, in order to enjoy the fragrance of the morning, she us'd frequently to ramble into the Park, before any of the family were stirring. One morning, after she had taken a longer walk than usual, she return'd by a hedge that inclosed part of the garden, and heard Miss Smith's voice louder than ordinary : A man's voice too she heard, but he spoke in a lower key. She stopp'd to listen, (so natural is curiosity) knew the man was Rivers, and overheard the following dialogue.

RIVERS. " Follow me no longer ; I  
" will not bear it : would you ruin me ?

Miss SMITH. " Ruin you ?—What, by  
" doating on you to extravagance ? — By  
" loving you more than life ?"

RIVERS.

RIVERS. " Yes, yes, I tell you.  
 " You know I speak the truth ; you know  
 " my father will disinherit me the mo-  
 " ment he knows we are married ; and  
 " that I can only secure his favour by  
 " marrying a fortune : you know all this,  
 " and yet oppose me."

MISS SMITH. " I don't care what be-  
 " comes of me ; I am undone already :  
 " for I love to distraction the man who  
 " loathes and detests me."

RIVERS. " Pray be composed a little,  
 " or we are undone, indeed, ungrateful  
 " Sally. Have I not made you my wife.  
 " You know I would not have married  
 " you, but because you refused to be mine  
 " on any other terms ; I could now get  
 " a woman quite fit for our purpose ;  
 " one who would not molest us, but leave  
 " her fortune to be spent on you, and yet  
 " you will not be easy. You'll certainly  
 " divulge our secret, if you don't act

“ with more caution. Why do you ob-  
 “ ject to this girl, more than to Miss  
 “ Egerton ? ”

Mrs SMITH. “ Because you like her  
 “ better.”

RIVERS. “ There you are mistaken.  
 “ She’s a d—mn’d fool, like the rest of  
 “ her sex, and only wants more wheedling.  
 “ Come, pr’ythee Sally, dry your eyes,  
 “ and resume your chearfulness : when  
 “ the ceremony is over, and I am sure of  
 “ my prey, I will spend all my happy  
 “ hours with you. — I will, believe  
 “ me.”

Miss SMITH. “ Oh ! how artfully do  
 “ you wind me to your purpose : you  
 “ know I can refuse you nothing ; or else,  
 “ do you think I would consent to your  
 “ making another woman as wretched as  
 “ you have made me ?

RIVERS. “ Pshaw, pshaw, how wildly  
 “ you talk ; I am sure I am in the most  
 “ danger ;

“ danger; for if you discover my plot, as  
 “ I am cursedly afraid you will, what will  
 “ become of me then?”

MISS SMITH. “ Fear me not, my  
 “ dear. Can I do any thing to injure the  
 “ man I love? All I ask in return is not  
 “ to be neglected, for a new face; I am  
 “ your first, your only wife, and you must  
 “ be only mine in reality.”

RIVERS. “ I will, I will be only yours;  
 “ but let’s be gone—it grows late—some  
 “ of the servants may be strolling this  
 “ way.”

AFTER this speech Rivers took hold of his cousin’s hand, while Chatlotte follow’d at a distance, full of amazement at what she had heard, and very much perplexed to know how to act. She could not think of concealing so villainous a plot, and yet knew not how to impart it either to Miss Aston or her mama. After some deliberation, she wrote the particulars of it to Mrs. Ramsden, and begg’d her immediate

E 6                      advice,

advice, resolving not to alter her behaviour, till she had receiv'd her answer.

Two days afterwards, she and Miss Aston return'd home by themselves; where they were receiv'd by Mrs. Aston with uncommon satisfaction: for she expected her son (and other company) from Dover every minute, having had a letter the day before to give her notice of his arrival there, after being absent near three years. In which letter he inform'd her, that he should be accompanied by a young gentleman and lady with whom he had contracted an acquaintance at Brussels; that he had invited them to Astor-park for a few weeks, because his friend, having broken his arm at Boulogne, and suffered a great deal in the passage afterwards, was unable to bear the fatigue of a journey to Yorkshire, whither he was going to take possession of an estate just come to him by the death of his father, where he had found out the relations of the young lady entrust-ed to his care. Great preparations were therefore

therefore making for the reception of such unexpected guests.

CHARLOTTE, thinking it proper to leave Mr. and Mrs. Aston to receive their son alone, retired to her own chamber, as the evening was not inviting enough for a walk. In the midst of a musing fit, the arrival of young Aston, with his company, made a bustle in the court-yard : upon which she could not refrain from going to her window : the first object she saw was Welford, with his arm in a sling, supported on one side by an exceeding pretty girl, and on the other by his fellow-traveller. Tis easier for the reader to conceive, than for me to describe her surprise at such a sight. A thousand ideas rush'd instantly into her mind, and she was almost ready to faint away. When she recover'd the shock, there arose many difficulties, with regard to the manner in which she should behave to him. Recollecting however, at last, that he could neither know her or like her, as her person was so much alter'd, and that he was most probably

probably in love with the girl, whose anxiety for his welfare seemed to proceed from something more than a common benevolence of disposition, she resolved to accost him as if he was a perfect stranger, hoping thereby to come at the reason of his leaving her so abruptly. She went down, but not without trembling, to welcome young Aston, who receiv'd her with great politeness, and presented the lady as one who merited her notice and favour. Charlotte behav'd to them with her accustom'd good manners, but when Welford approach'd to salute her, she was so much affected, that Miss Aston fear'd she was indispos'd. As the small-pox had entirely changed the form of her face, and depriv'd her of the fine eye-brows and eyelashes, which had form'd a distinguish'd part of her beauty. Welford recollect'd no traces of his old mistress. Her voice and manner, indeed, struck him particularly; and, tho' the name of Egerton was altogether new to him, the name of Charlotte, which Miss Aston frequently made use of when she spoke to her, threw him into such

such a ruminating fit on past occurrences, that his young companion and his friend Aston, began to take notice of it. He complained of a little fatigue by travelling briskly, and retir'd as soon as he decently could to the apartment allotted him : where he was attended by his friend, while Miss Aston took care of the young lady.

WHEN Aston return'd to his sister, he was very much importun'd by her to relate the history of his fair companion, and he satisfied her curiosity by the following account. " She is the daughter of an English merchant who settled many years ago at Brussels, and lately died there. Upon his death-bed he left this amiable girl, with ten thousand pounds to the care of my friend, and requested him to find out her relations in London as soon as he arriv'd there." " Then I suppose, Sir," said Charlotte, (who wanted to know every thing about Welford) " your friend is in love with his young ward, and that her father designed he should marry her."

"her." "I am ready to believe, Madam," said he, "that her father had such a design; but I am not so ready to think that my friend is in love with her: for, as he has been formerly ill-used by a lady on whom he fix'd his affections, he has conceiv'd no favourable opinion of your sex." Charlotte, tho' she knew not what to make of this speech, was pleased to hear that Welford was neither married nor engaged. And tho' she did not think it likely that he should be ever her's, she loved him too well, to bear the thoughts of his being another's. When the family retired to rest, she spent the night in reflecting on past scenes; in recalling those days, which flew away so happily, when Welford vowed never to forsake her, and in torturing her imagination, in vain, to trace out the motives of his conduct, and his reasons for accusing one of ill usage, who had never wilfully or knowingly offended him: she was willing however to think that some other woman for whom he had left her, by her misbehaviour,

*when blood is longish and*

*red.*

haviour, had occasion'd his dislike to the sex in general, and conceived hopes of regaining his affections. But when she consider'd that she was no longer mistress of the person, which first allur'd him, her hopes vanish'd and despair succeeded.

" And yet," said she, " why should I have so mean an opinion of my lover, as to imagine him liable to be captivated meerly by a face ?" Thus did she pass the night full of restlessness, but rose determin'd to conceal herself from him, and to study to make her company agreeable, that by forming an intimacy, she might one day muster up courage enough to ask him the reason of his former conduct. As she had chang'd her servants while he was abroad, they were not likely to inform him that she was so near. She amused herself all the morning with writing to Mrs. Ramsden, the only confidant she had, and sending her particulars of what had pass'd at Aston-park, and Sir William's. Mrs. Ramsden answer'd her letter by the return of the post, and begg'd she would, without de-

lay,

lay, communicate to Mr. and Mrs. Afton, all that she knew about Miss Smith and Rivers, in order to prevent the ruin of their daughter.

CHARLOTTE, tho' she thought herself obliged in honour to follow Mrs. Ramsden's advice, could not follow it without reluctance. She was concern'd for Miss Smith, who, she fear'd, would suffer in every shape, when her story became public. She therefore intreated Mr. and Mrs. Afton not to acquaint Miss nor any body else, with their true reasons for breaking the intimacy between her and young Rivers. They complied with her request, and only hinted to their daughter, how absurdly she behaved, (as she had engaged herself to Freemer) and insisted on her never seeing Rivers again. But Miss, who had been too much humour'd, to bear patiently the accent of reproof, told them in plain terms, that she hated Freemer, and should be miserable with him; but that she found in Rivers every thing she wished, and wonder'd they could have the least objection

objection to him : nay, she declar'd, on being closely press'd to give him up, that she would never marry any other man. They were then forc'd, by Charlotte's assistance, to prove that he was actually married to his cousin. This discovery very much surpriz'd Miss Aston, and shock'd her too ; for, with all her failings, she was not intentionally bad. Vanity, and a desire to behave like the fine ladies of her acquaintance, often led her into errors ; but whenever she was convinc'd that those errors would be attended with fatal consequences, she was very ready to renounce them.

A stop was immediately put to the intimacy between the two families : young Rivers soon found out that Charlotte had been an active agent against him, and from that time he watch'd for a proper opportunity to return the compliment.

CHARLOTTE had now, by her winning manner, made Welford so fond of her company, that he was very loth to quit Aston-

Aston-park, tho' his presence in Yorkshire was much wanted, and the conveyance of Miss Peterson, his charge, absolutely necessary to her relations. In short he was rooted there by a kind of enchantment, and spent all the time he could with her. When they walked in a fine evening with the family, they always contriv'd to separate themselves from their company ; but Miss Peterson, who liked Welford too much to be thoroughly easy, while he was in pursuit of another, often followed them, and would have been very troublesome, had not young Aston been smitten with her, and by that means prevented her, by saying tender things, and strolling with her into private walks. Miss Aston too, who was fond of every new character, took a fancy to Maria, and, under pretence of showing her the country, would often deprive her of Welford's company, which she chiefly delighted in. But Welford, tho' very polite, was too grave for Miss Aston : she therefore left him entirely to Charlotte, who every day became a greater favourite,

favourite, and received fresh instances of his confidence.

As Charlotte's principal view was to learn the reason of his deserting her, she introduced as often as she could handsomely, the subjects of love and marriage. One evening, when she knew Miss Peter-  
 son was engaged with Miss Aston and her brother, she thus addressed herself to him ;  
 " I think, Sir, your fair charge, Miss Pe-  
 " terson, is a very pretty figure : there is a  
 " simplicity in her behaviour which prepos-  
 " sesses me in her behalf, and I am much  
 " deceived if Mr. Aston has not a favour-  
 " able opinion of her. I should indeed  
 " wonder if he had not ; for surely it is  
 " impossible for any man to be often with  
 " so sweet a girl, without being charmed."  
 " Think you so, Madam?" said Wel-  
 ford. " What opinion can you then have  
 " of me ? For I have had great oppor-  
 " tunities to gain her affections, and have  
 " yet neglected them all." " I own," re-  
 plied she, smiling, " I don't know what  
 " to think of you. You seem particu-

" ly formed for the society of our sex,  
" and yet I often have observed in you  
" a dislike to Miss Peterson's company :  
" but I suppose you are attach'd to an-  
" other lady more suitable to your dis-  
" position." " Upon my word, Madam,"  
said he, " I am not so happy a man : I  
" have not been favoured by love, and  
" therefore ought not to think of it." " I  
" can't tell how to believe you," said  
Charlotte, " you must certainly then have  
" made a bad choice." " I have been  
" greatly disappointed, Madam," said  
he, " for the woman whom I thought  
" the best and most constant, prov'd to be  
" the most fickle and deceitful of her sex."  
Charlotte blush'd at the character, which  
she imagin'd was drawn for herself ; but  
quickly answer'd, " How do you know,  
" Sir, that she was so fickle and decei-  
" ful ? Did you ever see her treat another  
" man with an unbecoming familiarity ?"  
" No," said he, " nor did I suspect her to  
" be capable of such misbehaviour, till she  
" rejected me for another man." Charlotte  
was much surpriz'd at his answer ;  
but, being convinc'd that she had never  
acted

acted so unworthily, began to conclude  
 that he meant some other person : she was,  
 however, desirous of hearing the whole  
 truth of the affair, and thus went on : “ I  
 “ cannot help being desirous to know  
 “ who this lady is ? Excuse my curio-  
 “ sity, Sir ; I have met with a parallel  
 “ case ; with this difference only, that  
 “ the man was alone to blame.” “ I  
 “ see, Madam,” said Welford, “ you are  
 “ ready to condemn me, without a hear-  
 “ ing.” “ No, no,” replied she, “ I  
 “ shall not determine so hastily as you  
 “ did ; therefore name your fickle fair  
 “ one. Fickle and fair, indeed she was ;  
 “ yet, tho’ I have never mention’d her  
 “ name to any body, I will now, to clear  
 “ up your doubts of me, relate the  
 “ whole story of our loves. She was,  
 “ like you, Madam, a Charlotte. Her  
 “ Father, Mr. Byersley, was one of the  
 “ worthiest of men. Had his daughter  
 “ been as worthy, I should have been  
 “ happy long ago.” “ Don’t accuse her,”  
 cried Charlotte, “ for she was innocent. I  
 “ knew Miss Byersley well ; knew her at  
 “ the

“ the time you left her, and have all  
“ along suspected that you were the per-  
“ son whose absence she has so often la-  
“ mented to me.” “ Did you then  
“ know her ?” cried he. “ Did you  
“ know my once much-lov’d Charlotte ?  
“ Did she lament the loss of me ? Was  
“ she faithful ; and was I deceiv’d ? ”  
“ You was indeed deceiv’d,” said she,  
“ for I heard her declare a thousand times  
“ after you left her, that she esteemed you  
“ above all men ; nay, it was a great  
“ while before she could be perswaded to  
“ forget you.” “ Then she did at last  
“ forget me,” resumed he, with some  
warmth ? But, soon growing composed  
again added, “ I fear I have been too  
“ hasty : but is it yet too late ? You  
“ are her friend, Madam, may I not hope  
“ for your kind interposition in my fa-  
“ vour, when she becomes sensible that I am  
“ still faithful, and sincerely repent of my  
“ errors ? ” “ It is too late,” replied Char-  
lotte ; “ for she has changed her name,  
“ and is settled in the country.” “ Then  
“ she is married, and ’tis indeed too late,”  
said

said he. " But do you never see her now,  
 " Madam ? Tho' I must not hope to call  
 " her mine, I should be glad to have her  
 " satisfied that I am not guilty of the  
 " crime she suspects me of." " I don't  
 " see her often," replied Charlotte ; " but,  
 " in order to do you justice, I ought to  
 " be more circumstantially inform'd of  
 " your behaviour to her." Welford then  
 described every particular from his first  
 seeing her : together with every thing that  
 passed between him and Arabella.

CHARLOTTE was very much astonish'd at her friend's conduct, as she never had entertained the least thought of her falsehood, nor could she possibly guess at the occasion of it. She did not however interrupt Welford, till he mention'd his setting out for Dover : Then she said to him, " Oh ! Mr. Welford, what can I say to excuse that step ? Was it not a rash one ? Should you not have endeavour'd to see Charlotte yourself before you took your final resolution ?"

" I thought at that time, Madam, as you  
 " do now," replied he, " and before I  
 " reach'd my journey's end, order'd the  
 " chaise to return to the place from  
 " whence I set out ; being determin'd to  
 " meet once more, and upbraid her with  
 " her falsehood ; for I had then no doubts  
 " of it. But I could not put my design  
 " in execution ; for the driver informed  
 " me that one of his horses was sudden-  
 " ly lamed, and that he could but just  
 " carry me to the place I at first intend-  
 " ed to stop at. This speech of his  
 " disconcerted me greatly ; for I was too  
 " ill to think of mounting the other horse ;  
 " otherwise I should have rode back di-  
 " rectly, so eager was I to see her again.  
 " —O that I had seen her then !

" I WAS seiz'd with a fever that very  
 " night, which confined me to my bed for  
 " a fortnight : during which, I thought of  
 " nothing but returning to town the mo-  
 " ment I was able. At length my im-  
 " patience grew to such a height, that I  
 " wrote to a friend there, and I desired  
 " him

" him to make a very exact inquiry after  
 " Charlotte, and to communicate every  
 " thing he knew about her. He obey'd  
 " me but too punctually for my repose ;  
 " for he sent word that he had been in-  
 " form'd by her own maid, that she was  
 " actually on the point of being married  
 " to one Read, a person whom I had often  
 " met at Mr. Byersley's, but whom I re-  
 " garded only as a common acquaintance.  
 " My friend also told me that he had not  
 " trusted entirely to the reports of ser-  
 " vants ; but had taken pains to watch  
 " Read himself, and saw him go to and  
 " from the house so often, that he firmly  
 " believed the reports were true." " Did  
 " this friend of yours, Sir, said Charlotte,  
 " never undeceive you ? For Miss Byers-  
 " ley is not married to Mr. Read ; nor  
 " did she ever encourage him as a lover."  
 " He had no opportunity to undeceive me,  
 " Madam," said Welford ; for he died a  
 " few weeks after he sent me his intelli-  
 " gence, which served to hasten my jour-  
 " ney ; for I could no longer bear a place  
 " where I had felt so much uneasiness."

“ Consider, Madam, whether I am not  
“ deserving of your pity, and of Char-  
“ lotte’s forgiveness, which I don’t des-  
“ pair of, thro’ your mediation : but  
“ what punishment ought that devil A-  
“ rabella to receive, for separating, mere-  
“ ly out of wantonness, two people who  
“ seemed formed to make each other  
“ happy ?”

CHARLOTTE was as much at a loss as Welford to assign any reason for Bell’s conduct : nay, she sometimes was inclin’d, notwithstanding her esteem for him, to doubt his veracity. But when he repeatedly protested that he did not leave England till he had received the most circumstantial proofs of his Charlotte’s inconstancy, and that he had never settled his affections on any other woman, she was at length convinc’d of his sincerity and Arabella’s perfidy. However, the pleasure she felt at being still regarded by him, was very much damp’d, when she reflected that the small-pox had rendered her unknown to him. She therefore would not discover herself,

herself, but endeavoured to improve the friendship which subsisted between them, till she found a proper opportunity to throw off the mask. With this view she spent all her leisure hours with him, which were not many; for Mrs. Aston and her daughter grew every day more pleased with her, and hinder'd her from eloping as often as she wish'd.

WELFORD, when he first approach'd to salute Charlotte, thought there was some distant resemblance between her and his old mistress: that resemblance increas'd with their intimacy; for he found not only a similitude of voice, but of manner also: in short, so many of her ways corresponded with those of her namesake, that he was a second time ready to declare his love. Charlotte perceived his emotions with joy, and was only afraid that he would leave Kent before she had made a lasting impression on him: but her fears soon vanish'd; for his uncle, who went down to Yorkshire, as soon as he had inform'd him of his father's death, and who

had receiv'd an account of his accident, sent a letter to desire that he would not undertake so long a journey too soon ; assuring him that he would take such care of his affairs that they should not require his immediate presence. As he was convinc'd of his uncle's affection and integrity, and much press'd by the whole family, who were extremely pleased with his company, to stay at Aston-park, he gave up all thoughts of quitting it. His only care was about Miss Peterson ; but young Aston soon made him easy on her account, by promising, with his leave, to see her safe in town, and deliver her to her relations. Welford chearfully agreed to his friend's entreaty, who set out with her in a few days, accompanied by his sister.

Miss Aston was highly pleased to leave a place which she so much detested ; but her papa and mama consented with great reluctance to her departure, being apprehensive that Rivers would lie in wait for her, and seize every opportunity to see her alone.

Just before the day was fix'd, Mr. Freeman sent to let them know, that he was upon the return to Kent, and should stay about a week in town: they obliged their daughter therefore to promise that she would meet him with her brother, and come back with him to Aston-park.

WHILE Miss Aston and Miss Peterson were employed in taking leave of their neighbours, Charlotte and Welford had a good deal of time to themselves. As they were sitting one afternoon under a large tree in the park, and talking over past occurrences, Charlotte, having prattled with unusual fluency, stopped on a sudden, and told him she had exhausted her spirits to entertain him, and that he owed her something for the pains she had taken, whether she had succeeded or not. "I frankly acknowledge my obligations to you, Madam," said he; "but am incapable of returning them, as I cannot express my sentiments with your ease and gratefulness." She smiled at this gallant an-

swer, and replied, " I believe you men  
 " think we never say nor do any thing  
 " without expecting a compliment ; but  
 " if my chat has really amused you, I  
 " can put you in a way to give me as  
 " much pleasure with very little trouble.  
 " I only want to know how you past your  
 " time after you left England : for I am  
 " sure that a detail of your adventures  
 " must be entertaining." " I am afraid,  
 " Madam," said he, " you will be dis-  
 " appointed ; but to shew you how desir-  
 " ous I am to oblige you, I will begin  
 " immediately.

" No traveller, I believe, met with  
 " fewer adventures ; I left England full  
 " of discontent, and found not the relief  
 " I expected abroad : Charlotte's image  
 " was continually before me, and made  
 " me averse to the company of all wo-  
 " men. I avoided every place frequented  
 " by them, and only visited the public  
 " gardens in France, when they were  
 " most solitary ; I contracted no intimacy  
 " with a sex I imagin'd so deceitful, but  
 " spent

" spent my time chiefly in viewing the  
 " buildings, &c. worth notice, and in  
 " riding, walking, or reading, without at-  
 " taching myself to any body. Thus I  
 " went over France and Italy, and thus  
 " should have passed thro' Flanders, I be-  
 " lieve, had not a violent and malignant  
 " fever prevented my intentions : at Brus-  
 " sels the house I lodged at was, luckily  
 " for me, occupied by an Englishman,  
 " who having met with misfortunes in  
 " his own country, had retired to that  
 " place, and subsisted by letting out his  
 " house, and trafficking in a retail-way  
 " among the merchants.

" ONE of those merchants was his  
 " neighbour, and the father of Miss Pe-  
 " terson, whose mother died about three  
 " years ago : when I was taken ill, my  
 " disorder was so like her's, that upon my  
 " landlord's mentioning it to the family,  
 " they advis'd him to keep me from a  
 " particular regimen, to which they attri-  
 " buted her death. I followed my land-  
 " lord's prescriptions, and they were so.

“ efficacious, that I soon dismissed one of  
“ my doctors, and was in a short time  
“ able to quit my chamber. But as I  
“ recover'd my strength very slowly, the  
“ friendly Mr. Peterson would often  
“ come to amuse me, and insisted on my  
“ going to see him as often. He was a  
“ a very entertaining companion, and I  
“ receiv'd a great deal of pleasure from  
“ his acquaintance. Tho' his daughter  
“ Maria had many personal charms, I  
“ only paid her the civilities that are due  
“ to her sex. Her father made her sit fre-  
“ quently with us and join in the con-  
“ versation; but she was too bashful and  
“ timorous to be agreeable, tho' I could  
“ not help allowing her to be handsome.  
“ Beauty, Madam, alone can never please  
“ me long: I have a mind as well as an  
“ eye; and the latter is soon satisfied,  
“ when there is nothing to gratify the  
“ former. There was something in Ma-  
“ ria, which made her appear lifeless and  
“ insipid to me; but her indulgent fa-  
“ ther thought she was all-perfection, and,  
“ having heard from some English gen-  
“ tlemen

" tlemen that I was heir to a large estate,  
 " frankly offered me his daughter with  
 " half his fortune down, and the remain-  
 " der at his death. I was shock'd at the  
 " suddenness of his proposal, but rejected  
 " it as politely as I could : not but that it  
 " vexed me to defeat his generous de-  
 " signs. He appear'd both grieved and  
 " surprized at my behaviour ; he told me  
 " that he lov'd me as tenderly as if I had  
 " been his own son ; and could not have  
 " expected so abrupt a refusal ; that he  
 " always intended his daughter should set-  
 " tle in England, and had not seen a man,  
 " till he met with me, on whom he could  
 " safely rely. I was really sorry for his  
 " disappointment ; for he was a worthy  
 " man : but I had not the smallest re-  
 " gard for his Maria, and told him I had  
 " no intention to marry : he blamed me  
 " for saying so ; and assured me that if  
 " a man found an amiable and virtuous  
 " woman, who was capable of loving  
 " fondly, no state was equal to the ma-  
 " trimonial one. I then was going to  
 " take leave of him in order to pursue my

" route, but he insisted on my spending  
" the winter months with him. I con-  
" sented, after much importunity, and he  
" omitted nothing that could make Brus-  
" sels agreeable to me: the fair Maria  
" also redoubled her diligence to please  
" me, and seem'd not to be offended at  
" my refusing her. Things were in this  
" situation when the arrival of Mr. Aston  
" with a friend of Mr. Peterson's, and  
" Mr. Peterson's illness made a great  
" change in our affairs. He often assured  
" us that he should never recover, but we  
" endeavoured to divert his melancholy,  
" lest it should retard his cure. One  
" day as I was sitting by his bedside, he  
" took hold of my hand, and said, " Wel-  
" ford, I love you; and wish you had  
" loved my daughter; but inclination will  
" never be forc'd. I have now only one  
" request to make, and I think you can-  
" not deny me. The news you have re-  
" ceiv'd of your father's death will, I  
" know, hasten your departure to Eng-  
" land. England is my native country,  
" and, tho' my daughter was born here, I  
" chuse

“ chuse she should settle there ; for there  
“ she has relations both on my side and  
“ her mother’s, to whom I will send her :  
“ But who can I so properly trust her  
“ with as you ? Don’t be surpriz’d, Sir,  
“ I ask you not to marry her ; you may  
“ behave to her as a brother and a friend.  
“ The man who is insensible to her beau-  
“ ty will not injure it himself ; and the  
“ man who has honour will take care that  
“ no body else shall. Grant me there-  
“ fore, dear Welford, this last, this only  
“ favour ; and see my girl safe among  
“ her friends and relations.” “ He stop’d  
“ here—I was too much affected for some  
“ moments to answer him. When I was  
“ able to speak I assured him I would take  
“ his daughter and her fortune under my  
“ care, till I delivered both to her relations ;  
“ with a particular request that I might see  
“ her wedded to a man very deserving of  
“ her. I have so far fulfill’d my friend’s  
“ request as to bring her to England, and  
“ wish she may be disposed to favour the  
“ address of Mr. Aston, for whom I have  
“ pressingly interceded, because I know  
“ his

“ his worth ; but in vain—She only answers me with sighs, which give me no small concern, as I think she can never place her affections on a worthier object. I have received many proofs of the goodness of his disposition, ever since our first acquaintance. When I unfortunately broke my arm at Boulogne, he attended me with uncommon tenderness, and tried to alleviate my pains by every method in his power : and 'tis to him I am particularly indebted for the satisfaction I at present enjoy in your company. Here, Madam, I must close the relation of my adventures, which has, I am afraid, been very dry and unentertaining.” “ Not at all, Sir,” said Charlotte, “ it has pleased me greatly ; tho' I believe you are the first young gentleman, to whose care a fine young girl of fortune was entrusted, in the manner you have described. But I must ask two or three questions. Did not the affiduities of the pretty Maria ; did not the closer intimacies between you, during your journey, make

“ an

" an alteration of your sentiments in her  
" favour ? Did you not discover charms  
" in her till then unknown ?" " No,  
" Madam, upon my word," replied he,  
" I am as indifferent as I was at first ;  
" nay, rather more so." " And do you  
" really think you shall be so indifferent  
" about every woman ?" said she. " If  
" Miss Byersley was unmarried and faith-  
" ful, how happy should I be with her !"  
said he. " Will no other woman make  
" you happy but the only woman you  
" can never marry ?" said she. " I am  
" not certain of that, Madam," said he ;  
" time and—" Here he paus'd, and fix'd  
his eyes tenderly on Charlotte, who cast  
hers down, impatiently expecting him to  
finish so interesting a speech, when the ar-  
rival of Miss Aston and Miss Peterson  
prevented her from enjoying so sweet a  
satisfaction.

The END of the Third Book.

red as pectoral. Head blackish brown  
except white patch on each side of neck  
and above. "I saw you near the road at  
the bridge "I know you now "and  
still as how I am described as "as I  
say about 4 ft. "Not from weight, you  
impression of old man you said, when  
I "I said him "I know you now  
and this bird seems to be yellowish white  
"I saw him so I thought you were like  
old man now who old and yellow now  
and I "I said him "I know you now  
and him "yellowish white is always bad "  
I said him I know you well "—Therefore  
also old yellowish no yellow eyes all  
of this species yellowish always and  
as old yellow. This is a good bird of which  
most of them have not a white in them  
as much or perhaps more than I say

*Goodwill goes on and on!*

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## CHIT CHAT, &c.

### BOOK the FOURTH.

NEVER was there a more mortifying interruption : never was Charlotte more disconcerted and displeased : but Miss Aston was too much taken up with giving an account of the ridiculous creatures she had been visiting, in her lively and satirical manner, to perceive her confusion : the gentle Maria indeed discover'd it, and ask'd her if she was indispos'd. Upon which Welford started, as it were, from a profound reverie, and asked the same question with so much apparent

parent concern, that she did her utmost to recover her usual serenity.

THE next day Mr. Astor accompanied the two ladies to London, but Miss Petersen could not leave Welford without shewing a great deal of uneasiness. When they were gone, Charlotte exerted all the arts of pleasing, in order to fix the man who seem'd to entertain such favourable thoughts of her: and wish'd impatiently that he would make a declaration of them, that she might quit a disguise which grew troublesome to her. During this irksome suspense she heard, to her great astonishment, one morning as soon as she rose, that Welford set out very early for London. She could scarce believe her servant, (who brought the news when she came to dress her) as she had spent the preceding evening with him, and did not recollect the least hint of so sudden a departure. She had indeed observed that he was particularly thoughtful before he retired, but flatter'd herself that arose from his regard for her. How bitter then must have been  
her

Her disappointment! In short, she never had so mean an opinion of herself before, and was quite enrag'd against all mankind: yet she long'd to know the reason of this second abrupt departure, and flatter'd herself with hopes that Mr. Aston might be able to inform her, tho' she could not imagine why she was not entrusted with it. She hasten'd to breakfast, and Mr. Aston thus accosted her:

" I see Madam, that you are surpriz'd at  
 " not finding Mr. Welford here: he told  
 " me last night, after you had left us,  
 " that he had receiv'd a letter which  
 " would oblige him to leave Aston-park  
 " very early this morning, made a thou-  
 " sand apologies for going away so sud-  
 " denly, and invited me and all my fa-  
 " mily to his seat in Yorkshire: as he  
 " did not mention your name, I thought  
 " you was inform'd of his intentions." Charlotte was so excessively shock'd at being thus a second time abandon'd by Welford, that she knew not what answer to make. She therefore framed some trifling excuse to leave the room, that her confusion might not

not be observ'd. From that moment all the uneasiness she had so long experienc'd, and which was only suspended while the chief causer of it was at Aston-park, returned with double force. Yet, in spite of all his unkindness, she endeavour'd to palliate his conduct. "Has he again been deceived," said she, "with regard to me? And is there another Arabella to make me completely wretched? But why should I take pains to vindicate him? Perhaps he has only invented a plausible story, the better to conceal his falsehood. Yet, why should he act in such a clandestine manner? He certainly knew me, notwithstanding the alteration in my person, and finding me still fond of him, had a mind to divert himself longer at my expence."

Thus did poor Charlotte argue with herself, but all the efforts she us'd to resume her former tranquillity were fruitless. The country became hateful to her, and she wished for nothing but a handsome opportunity to return to town, in order to

to enjoy the conversation of Mrs. Ramsden, from whom alone she expected any comfort or society. But she could not genteelly leave Mrs. Aston till the arrival of her daughter ; nor could she afterwards prevail on the good lady to part with her. " You have always promised," said she to her, " to be present at my daughter's marriage, and I have too good an opinion of you to think that you will break your word."

CHARLOTTE consented to stay. Her politeness would not suffer her to refuse the request of a lady, for whom she had a real esteem, as she had been most obligingly treated by her, from the first moment of their acquaintance.

IN a few days Miss Aston, attended by her brother and Mr. Freemer, arriv'd safe ; but, to the great surprize of her father and mother, in a stage-coach, as she went to town in their own, which was order'd to wait on her during her stay there. The truth was, the axle-tree had broke upon

the

the road, and obliged them all to take up  
 with an inn, while some workmen were  
 employ'd to repair it. But when the  
 workmen told them it could not be done  
 in haste, young Aston prevailed on his  
 sister to be conveyed in this odious vehicle  
 (so she call'd it) which happen'd luckily  
 to stop at that time, and which only con-  
 tain'd a lady and her maid: she made a  
 number of complaints at the awkwardness  
 of it, and declared she never was in so ter-  
 rible a situation before. But Mr. and Mrs.  
 Aston, who had none of their daughter's  
 airs, rejoiced exceedingly at her return,  
 and highly commended their son for being  
 so expeditious. "Lord, Sir," cried she  
 to her father, "you can't conceive how  
 " I was shock'd at getting into the filthy  
 " coach, for fear any body should know  
 " me; and I durst not once put my head  
 " out of the window, tho' I was stifled  
 " with heat, left any of my acquaintance  
 " should see me in so miserable a plight  
 " on the road: and then such company,  
 " would you believe it, Sir, we had only  
 " a poor, sick, grunting woman and her  
 " maid,

" maid, I suppose ; tho' nobody would  
 " think she could have afforded to keep  
 " one. Such faces and such smells—  
 " fogh—what a surfeit—I am sure I was  
 " almost poison'd with them." " Fie !  
 " sister," said young Aston ; " how can  
 " you be so severe on the poor creature,  
 " who was, I dare say, in very great dis-  
 " tress." " Yes, yes, so it seems," cried  
 she ; " or else I fancy Mr. Freemer would  
 " not have paid for her passage." " Paid  
 " for her passage," said Mrs. Aston ; " she  
 " must, indeed, have been in great dis-  
 " tress to accept of such a favour from a  
 " stranger." " Oh ! you may be sure,"  
 said Miss, with an arch leer, " she is some  
 " female adventurer, and Mr. Freemer,  
 " perhaps, may not be such a stranger to  
 " her." " Indeed, Miss Aston," replied  
 Mr. Freemer, " I never beheld the un-  
 " happy lady before, and she really be-  
 " hav'd herself so handsomely that I was  
 " ashame'd to offer my assistance, till I  
 " saw the coachman would not be satis-  
 " fied without his fare ; and found (in  
 " spite of all her efforts to conceal her  
     " poverty)

" poverty) that she had not money e-  
 " nough to pay it. Miss Aston return'd  
 " no other answer to this speech, but  
 " Ay, ay; I love vastly to see men  
 " compassionate," and winked at Char-  
 lotte, who desired him to relate the whole  
 affair.

" When we entered the coach, " Ma-  
 " dam," said he, " the lady who has so  
 " much offended Miss Aston's delicacy,  
 " behav'd quite like a person who had  
 " been us'd to company, and only seem'd  
 " oppress'd with illness and fatigue. When  
 " the coach stop'd, she took her leave  
 " very politely, but was scarcely got from  
 " the door when the coachman gave her  
 " very foul language, and insisted on her  
 " paying him directly. Mr. Aston and  
 " I interposed, and asked what he meant  
 " by so much rudeness? He bluntly an-  
 " swer'd, that he would not stir without  
 " his cash. The lady then approach'd  
 " with a good deal of confusion and  
 " thus addressed us: " I am sorry and  
 " ashamed, gentlemen, to appear in so  
 " mean

" mean a light to you ; but I dare say  
 " you will pity me when you know  
 " how unluckily I am circumstanc'd. I  
 " was taken very ill soon after I set out  
 " from London, and have been obliged  
 " to spend more upon the road than I  
 " intended. I would fain persuade the  
 " coachman to trust me till I receive a sup-  
 " ply from thence ; but he is obstinate,  
 " and only answers with scurrility." " I  
 " was concern'd to see a woman, who  
 " seem'd far above the common rank, so  
 " much embarrass'd, and begg'd she  
 " would accept of a trifle to silence the  
 " coachman : she receiv'd it with a mo-  
 " dest reluctance, express'd a thousand ac-  
 " knowledgments, and desir'd to know  
 " where I lived, that she might grate-  
 " fully repay me. She then dropt a gen-  
 " teal court'sy, and took her leave a se-  
 " cond time. This is the true state of  
 " the affair." " Pray, Sir," said Charlotte,  
 " don't you know whither she was going ;  
 " for I suppose she did not think of re-  
 " maining at the inn ?" " No really,  
 " Madam," said he ; " we inquir'd of

" the coachman, but he could only inform us, that she was enter'd in the book by the name of Gaston." " I pity her extremely," said Mrs. Aston ; " she certainly must want farther assistance. I will send after her, if you think it proper ? " " That shall be my care, Madam, with your leave," said Charlotte, who was always dispos'd to relieve the unfortunate.

CHARLOTTE then stept out of the room, inclos'd five guineas in a paper, with a written apology for the liberty she took, and order'd the maid to ask at the inn for Mrs. Gaston, and to make all the inquiries she could about her.

As soon as she had dispatch'd her servant, she return'd to her friends, hoping to learn some tidings of young Aston, from Welford ; supposing he must have seen, or at least heard of him. Just when she re-entered the room, he was telling his father how much he was surpriz'd one morning in town to see Welford, who said he had been

been obliged to leave Kent abruptly, on the receipt of a letter ; and talk'd of setting out in a few weeks for Yorkshire.

CHARLOTTE's doubts about her lover were rather increas'd than lessen'd, by young Aston's account of him : she knew not what to think of his behaviour. Sometimes she fancied that he was really in love with Maria, and that he went to town merely for the sake of her company ; but that surmise soon vanished, when she recollect'd how earnestly he had declar'd that he wanted her to favour his friend's addresses. She longed to ask a thousand questions, but suppressed her curiosity, lest it should be taken notice of ; and contented herself with inquiring after Miss Peterson : young Aston told her he had deliver'd her safe to Mrs. Deacon, a sister of her father's, and a very agreeable woman, who receiv'd her with great affection.

CHARLOTTE began to fancy, by young Aston's cheerfulness, that he too had been

kindly receiv'd by Mrs. Deacon ; but durst not say so, as she had never heard of his inclination for Miss Peterson, but from Welford, whose whole conduct was so enigmatical, that the more she strove to unriddle it, the more she was perplexed : she found, however, by the conversation of that gentleman and his sister, that they had often met him at Mrs. Deacon's, and that he had waited on them to Ranelagh, Vauxhall, and other public places. When she inquir'd after Mrs. Ramsden, the giddy Miss Aston waked out of the lethargy she had seemingly fallen into, on being shubb'd about Mrs. Gaston, and cried,

“ Lord, Charlotte ! what has my stupid  
“ head been thinking of ? I forgot to  
“ tell you that Maria is Mrs. Ramsden's  
“ sister.” “ Her sister ?” said Charlotte.

“ Aye, child,” replied Miss Aston ; “ she  
“ had a mother in Flanders, people say,  
“ who married Maria's father twenty years  
“ ago ; but the girl did not know how  
“ to find her, by that name, as you know  
“ she has but lately taken it. She only  
“ told her aunt that she had a sister in  
“ town,

" town, one Mrs. Bootle, to whom her  
 " father intended to send her, if she her-  
 " self had not been alive. Mrs. Deacon  
 " mention'd this circumstance to me, and  
 " I immediately went with them both to  
 " see her; but she was gone out of town  
 " for a week or ten days, with old Rams-  
 " den, and Frankly and his wife." " Did  
 " Mr. Welford go with you?" said Char-  
 lotte eagerly. " No, child," cried Miss  
 Aston; " we seldom were visited by him;  
 " but methinks, my dear," continued she,  
 with an arch look, " you are very inqui-  
 " sitive about this same Welford; but  
 " take my word for it, Charlotte, it is  
 " not worth while; for I positively think,  
 " *entre nous*, that he is more insensible  
 " than Freemer." This last sentence was  
 utter'd in a sort of whisper; but Freemer,  
 having excellent ears, prick'd them up at  
 the word insensible, took hold of both her  
 hands, and looking fondly at her, said,  
 " What am I, Miss Aston?" " I shan't  
 " tell you, indeed," replied she, somewhat  
 fiercely. " Well, well," said he, " as  
 " long as I am the subject of your con-

"versation I shall make myself easfy." It was lucky for poor Charlotte that he interrupted the course of Miss Aston's railery ; for he gave her an opportunity to hide the confusion it had occasion'd, by retiring to her own chamber : there she revolved in her mind the various things she heard ; Maria's near relationship to Mrs. Ramsden and Mrs. Frankly, fill'd her with surprize ; but it also gave her joy, as she hoped, by the assistance of those friends to hear of Welford, with whom they would, in all probablity, become acquainted, because he had in some measure the care of Miss Peterson's affairs, and could not avoid seeing her, when in town, out of civility at least, if not out of inclination.

AFTER she had amused herself a few minutes with these reflections, she sent a full account of what had past to Mrs. Ramsden, without any reserve, as she was thoroughly convinc'd of her fidelity. When she had finish'd her letter, her servant return'd from Mrs. Gaston, whom she found  
at

at a farm-house in the neighbourhood.  
 " She was much indisposed, Madam," said the servant, " and to all appearance, greatly astonish'd at the sight of your note; and when she receiv'd it, she ask'd in a trembling voice from whom I came. I was coming away without telling her, but she pres'd me so much that I said, Miss Egerton. " What, Charlotte Egerton?" cried she hastily.  
 " Yes, Madam," said I. " I thought so," replied she : " pray tell your lady, that I am not unknown to her, and that I beg she would add to the favours she has already confer'd on me, by calling on me to-morrow."

CHARLOTTE's curiosity was very much excited by this message from Mrs. Gaston, as she could not recollect any person with that name, or in those circumstances. She set out therefore on the next morning for the farm-house, attended by her maid, and was immediately conducted into a little room there, and beheld in the object of her charity, her once-lov'd Arabella.

LADY Tiers made an effort to rise, and said, "Pardon the liberty I have taken  
 " with you, Miss Egerton: after neglect-  
 " ing you so long, I have met with a va-  
 " riety of misfortunes since I saw you,  
 " which you must have heard of, and  
 " have often wish'd to meet with you  
 " again; but I despair'd of that satisfac-  
 " tion, till your generous present came  
 " to my unexpecting hands." "I con-  
 " fess," said Charlotte, "I little thought,  
 " when I came out, of meeting with lady  
 " Tiers; but I am so far from being  
 " displeas'd at your sending for me, that  
 " I can assure you there is nothing I more  
 " earnestly desired than an opportunity  
 " of conversing with you. I shall be still  
 " more pleased if it is in my power to be  
 " serviceable to you; but believe me, I  
 " am quite ignorant of your affairs."  
 " You shall not be long so then;" replied  
 her ladyship, (who secretly rejoiced that  
 Charlotte knew nothing of her irregular  
 conduct, and put the best face upon the  
 matter, by telling her story plausibly.)

Oh!

" Oh ! my dear Charlotte, if I may still  
 " be allow'd to use that friendly appella-  
 " tion, I was not always, you know, the  
 " poor creature I now am : fortune once  
 " smil'd on me ; but a hasty marriage has  
 " brought me to this miserable state : how-  
 " ever we are all liable to be deceiv'd.—  
 " I have been most grossly so.—Sir Fran-  
 " cis, who appear'd to be a man of cha-  
 " racter and fortune, was in reality no  
 " better than a sharper, and over head  
 " and ears in debt. In vain did I remon-  
 " strate to him daily, that we shou'd be  
 " inevitably ruin'd if he continued to live  
 " at so wild a rate, and urge him to re-  
 " trench his extravagancies : he only up-  
 " braided me for my prudent advice, and  
 " told me I grudged him necessaries. In  
 " this manner did we just make a shift  
 " to subsist, till about a month ago, I  
 " heard one morning, when I rose, that  
 " Sir Francis had not been at home all  
 " night ; and soon afterwards, to my  
 " great astonishment, saw the house fill'd  
 " with officers, who came to seize every  
 " thing to satisfy his creditors. I could

" hot oppose them. They ran sack'd every  
 " hole and corner, and only left me my  
 " wearing apparel, and a few trinkets of  
 " no value ; for Sir Francis had carried  
 " off all my jewels of consequence to  
 " France, as one of his servants inform'd  
 " me. 'Tis impossible to paint my dis-  
 " tress, which was greatly aggravated by  
 " this discovery, this shocking discovery.  
 " I was obliged to move ; but knew not  
 " where to go : at last, my maid recom-  
 " mended me to an acquaintance of hers  
 " who had lodgings to let : to her I re-  
 " tir'd ; and in a little time found out  
 " the symptoms of a disease which I be-  
 " lieve will soon put an end to my life.  
 " To heighten the misery I endured, my  
 " maid left me abruptly : then I was very  
 " much reduced ; for I had two enemies  
 " to struggle with, sickness and poverty ;  
 " and I must have sunk under their unit-  
 " ed attacks, had not this girl, (pointing  
 " to her servant) this truly humane girl,  
 " who was hired by the people of the  
 " house to wait on me, seasonably reliev'd  
 " me :

" me : she told me she had relations in  
 " the country with whom I might board  
 " cheap, if I could bear the fatigue of  
 " travelling, till my affairs were settled.  
 " I follow'd her advice, and secur'd pla-  
 " ces in the stage, but, being taken ill  
 " upon the road, was forc'd to spend all  
 " my little stock ; so that when I came to  
 " the inn, I was in a terrible dilemma ;  
 " for the coachman was clamorous for his  
 " fare, and would have grossly abused  
 " me, had not a gentleman, perfectly un-  
 " known to me, generously interposed and  
 " lent me enough to satisfy the brute's  
 " demand."

CHARLOTTE interrupted her ladyship,  
 by saying, " Had you then not one friend  
 " left ? Would no body compassionate  
 " your situation, and furnish you with  
 " a sum sufficient to prevent such dis-  
 " couraging shifts ?" " Not one," re-  
 " plied her ladyship : " I once indeed,  
 " thought of applying to you, having  
 " heard of the addition to your fortune ;  
 " but was entirely at a loss where to find  
 " you ; besides, I was really ashamed, af-

" ter behaving so unhandsomely to you,  
 " to sollicit your charity. Nor should I  
 " have ventur'd now, had I not received  
 " your note; which convinced me that you  
 " were the same benevolent and generous  
 " creature I ever knew you." "Indeed,  
 " lady Tiers," said Charlotte, "you have  
 " us'd me unkindly, but we'll talk of that  
 " hereafter: at present I should be glad  
 " to know how you intend to dispose of  
 " yourself. You cannot subsist any where  
 " without money; besides, you have a  
 " daughter who demands your tenderest  
 " protection." Lady Tiers, who did not  
 in the least imagine that Charlotte had  
 any knowledge of the child, was very much  
 confused; and concluding that all her  
 failings were detected, she resolved to play  
 the hypocrite no longer, but to make a  
 friend of Charlotte, by dealing ingenuously  
 with her; she therefore answer'd, "Why,  
 " I confess, I have been too negligent of  
 " the poor little wretch; but it was ne-  
 " ver in my power to take care of it, as  
 " I ought." "Not in your power;" said  
 Charlotte, "could you not afford so  
 " trifling a sum as half a crown a week  
 " for

" for its maintenance? You might, at  
 " least, have enquir'd after its health; I  
 " don't believe you know whether 'tis  
 " dead or alive." " If I don't," replied  
 my lady reddening with shame and vex-  
 ation, " can you inform me? Oh, Char-  
 " lotte! Charlotte! in how odious a light  
 " do you make me appear? Do, pity  
 " my failings; and, if you can, forgive  
 " me." " I can forgive you, lady Tiers,"  
 said Charlotte; " and tho' you have in-  
 " jured me, I fear beyond reparation, I  
 " will be your friend." She then told  
 her in what manner she had found out  
 her child, and taken care of it. " I can-  
 " not," said she, " behold either you or  
 " the little innocent in distress, while I  
 " am capable of relieving you; let me  
 " only know where you would chuse to  
 " live till Sir Francis returns, and I will  
 " furnish you with means to live com-  
 " fortably." " Thou best of creatures,"  
 answer'd lady Tiers, " how undeserving  
 " am I of this goodness!" " Mention  
 " no more of that," said Charlotte, " but  
 " take time to consider what place will be  
 " most agreeable to you." " I have no  
 " choice,"

"choice," said she; "my ill health will  
 "not suffer me to enjoy your favours  
 "long any where." "Your health, in-  
 "deed," said Charlotte, "ought to be  
 "consulted, and one place may be more  
 "salutary than another; what think you  
 "of a journey to Bath? But first take  
 "the opinion of a physician." "I am  
 "well assured," replied lady Tiers, "that  
 "a Bath journey will do one good, if any  
 "thing will; but how can I bear to think  
 "of living at your expence? What  
 "thanks are due to such boundless gene-  
 "rosity?" "Say no more," said Char-  
 lotte on that subject; "you owe me no  
 "thanks: I am angry with you notwith-  
 "standing, and am going to chide you;  
 "promise me, however, before I begin, to  
 "answer two or three questions with the  
 "utmost sincerity." "I will, by all  
 "that's sacred, said my lady." "Did  
 "you, then," said Charlotte, "ever try to  
 "make a breach between me and Welford?  
 "Did you ever tell him I hated him,  
 "and desired to see him no more?" "I  
 "did," said lady Tiers; "I made use of  
 "every

" every art I was mistress of to separate  
" you. My arts succeeded, and I am now  
" sorry they did, and beg your pardon."  
" You have it," said Charlotte, sighing;  
" but now lay aside all reserve, and tell what  
" reasons you had for acting so basely?"  
Any woman, but lady Tiers, would have  
been exceedingly shock'd and concern'd,  
at being thus catechiz'd by one so every  
way her superior; but she who dreaded  
nothing so much as poverty, and cared  
not how she came by money to gratify  
her expensive taste, was so elated with  
Charlotte's offer to provide for her, that  
she resumed all her former rattling gaiety,  
and cried; "Would any body in the  
" world but your self ask so odd a ques-  
" tion?" "You may be sure I took  
" pains to get him for my self." "But  
" your schemes were frustrated," said  
Charlotte. "They were," said my lady;  
" because the fellow went abroad, and  
" I've never seen him since." "Did  
" you like him," said Charlotte?" "Like  
" him," replied my lady; "aye, I think  
" I did; but I was actuated by resent-  
" ment

" ment more than inclination : you are  
 " intitled to sincerity, and shall know the  
 " secret springs of my conduct. You had,  
 " if you remember, just deprived me of  
 " Read ; I was thereupon very much  
 " piqued, and tried to divert Welford's  
 " attention from you. For, whatever you  
 " may imagine, my dear Charlotte, no  
 " woman breathing can bear to have a  
 " lover taken from her, without endea-  
 " vouring to make reprisals." " But I  
 " was altogether innocent," said Char-  
 lotte ; " for instead of using methods to  
 " gain Read's attention, I gave him as  
 " few opportunities as I could of speak-  
 " ing to me." " Very true," said my  
 lady ; " but if you was not in love with  
 " him, he was with you, and that provo-  
 " cation was enough for me : besides,  
 " Welford was a much prettier fellow."  
 " A very fine reason you give for your  
 " behaviour I must confess," said Char-  
 lotte ; " but I forgive you heartily." " If  
 " you would have me think that I am  
 " as heartily forgiven, pray let me know  
 " how your amours stand at present,"  
 said

said lady Tiers ; “ and who has succeed-  
“ ed this first favourite, who, by the way,  
“ was too credulous.” Charlotte not be-  
ing able to hear Welford blamed, patient-  
ly, by every body, especially by one who  
had so grossly misled him, nor willing to  
put a fresh confidence in her, return’d a  
slight answer, and took her leave ; telling  
her she would call again the next day.

LADY Tiers, being furnish’d in about  
a week afterwards with money to defray  
her expences, set out from London, in or-  
der to prepare for the Bath ; having first  
accompanied Charlotte in Mr. Afton’s  
coach to see her little daughter, who  
throve extremely under the care of her  
new nurse.

MRS. Afton, who was of a benevolent  
disposition, often inquired after the pre-  
tended Mrs. Gaston before she went ; Mrs.  
Freemer too was not less inquisitive. Both  
wanted to know her real situation, and were  
desirous to contribute to her relief : but  
Charlotte, not caring to expose lady Tiers,  
whom

whom she pitied sincerely, in spite of the wrongs she had received from her, only told them she was an old acquaintance who had been once in prosperous circumstances, but was reduc'd to difficulties by the extravagance of a husband : adding, that she would give her assistance, during her stay in that part of the country ; but that her affairs could not be decently communicated. As for Miss Aston, she was too giddy to reflect much, and never troubled her head about creatures who are mean enough to travel in stage-coaches : she therefore never inquired after the unhappy stranger : she hardly thought of any thing but the method she should make use of to gain the ascendant over a man whom she had promised in a short time to obey. Some unfashionable ladies may, perhaps, imagine that gentleness and affability are the best lures to gain, and the best traps to keep the affections of a husband : but the gay, the careless Miss Aston despised such lures and such traps ; deeming it beneath a woman of birth, beauty, fortune and fire to submit to such poor artifices.

fices. No, she was determin'd, as her friends had in some measure compelled her to marry a man she did not care a farthing for, to throw off all restraint on the wedding-day, and to govern afterwards in an arbitrary manner. Great preparations were making for that day, while Mr. Free-  
mer redoubled his assiduities, and thought of nothing but to make her happy; not without flattering himself that he should, by his tenderness after marriage, prevail on her to get the better of those foibles which prevented her beauties from appearing *dans tout leur jour.*

At length the appointed day arrived on which they were to be united for ever: the ceremony was as private as it could be: she would fain have persuaded her papa and mama, to let it be perform'd in the evening, at their own house; declar-  
ing that nothing in the world could be more vulgar than a wedding in the face of a gaping congregation. But neither Mr. nor Mrs. Afton, nor even Mr. Free-  
mer were of her opinion, tho' they did not openly

openly oppose her. Charlotte's sentiments on the subject were desired. She modestly said, " I think people of rank and fortune, instead of desiring to break through the laudable customs of their country, should be the first to set an example : and I think a woman pays her lover a proper compliment, when she publickly prefers him at the altar to all other men in the world."

EVERY body but Miss Aston was pleas'd with Charlotte's reply ; which ended the dispute. Never was there a more happy day at Aston-park : all but poor Charlotte shared in the general joy ; for tho' she had a heart perfectly form'd to sympathize with her friends, and was glad that Miss Aston stood the fairest chance to be happy, because nothing but her whimsical temper could probably hinder her from being so ; the solitariness of her own condition occasion'd many reflections which would not let her thoroughly enjoy their pleasantries. Not that she wanted to be married : for she had rejected offers which  
many

many of her equals, nay, superiors, would have accepted without any hesitation ; and had she never known Welford, wotld have perhaps, chosen a single life : but the satisfaction she had felt in his company, was so strongly impressed on her memory that she could not erase it. " Why am I," she would sometimes say to herself, " so different from all my sex, as to fancy no man agreeable but the man who despises me ? Why am I thus disposed to make myself unhappy ; and why can't I relish the society of my female friends ; without longing for any thing more ? Yet they are all married ; even the giddy Miss Aston, undeserving, as I may perhaps falsely imagine her, has fix'd on a worthy and agreeable man. Yet why do I envy her ? I never could have loved Mr. Freemer, if he had pitch'd upon me.—Nobody but Welford—Oh ! Welford, why do I still think of you ?—I must, I will conquer this foolish inclination."

THUS

Thus would she often reason in her moments of privacy, of which she had a great many, as Mrs. Aston was much taken up with her new son and her daughter. She was indeed obliged out of civility to be present at the visits Mrs. Freemer receiv'd from all the people of fashion in the neighbourhood, upon her marriage, and went with her to return several of them at her earnest request: for as she took pains to conceal the quietudes of her heart, her conversation was generally admired: it being easy and modest; cheerful but not flighty. One family in particular which was distantly related to Mrs. Aston, but had not visited the park a great while, made an entertainment on this occasion, and invited Charlotte among the rest, as fame had spoken loudly in her praise. She would willingly have declined the invitation; but Mrs. Freemer told her, no creature on earth was so proper to cure her of the vapours as Sir Positive Puff: " You must

"go

" go with us indeed, my dear," said she ;  
 " I'll lay my life you will be entertain'd ;  
 " however, that you may not be too much  
 " surpriz'd, I'll give yon a sketch of the  
 " Puff Family : Sir Positive himself is  
 " old, gouty, ill-humour'd, obstinate, and  
 " proud ; Miss Deborah, his sister, is a  
 " young lady of five and forty, with all  
 " the affectation of fifteen : and so intole-  
 " rably prudish, that she thinks every  
 " man who looks at her has a design,  
 " upon her person : and if they should  
 " happen to touch her accidentally, (for  
 " I am pretty sure no body ever thought  
 " of doing it on purpose) she screams as  
 " if she was going to be ravished. Sir  
 " Positive has always had the manage-  
 " ment of her and her fortune, and has  
 " had the dexterity hitherto to keep her  
 " from marrying, that the money may  
 " not go out of the family ; tho' he has  
 " no child to inherit it. My lady is a poor,  
 " tame, insipid soul, over-aw'd by her  
 " husband and his sister."

CHARLOTTE set out with the Astons and the Freemers to Sir Positive's mansion-house, where they found a droll addition of odd characters they never expected. These were, Justice Cramwell, one of Sir Positive's near relations and neighbour; Beau Lavender, who had married his daughter, because their estates join'd; and a young counsellor, nephew to lady Puff, who came down to attend the judges on their circuit.

SIR Positive receiv'd Mr. and Mrs. Free-  
mer with great solemnity: and told them,  
as they had but lately put on the matri-  
monial shackles, he had chose as proper  
companions for them, Mr. Lavender and  
his wife, who were only in the sixth month  
of their cohabitation. "Aye, begad,"  
cried the beau, "and it seems a cursed  
"long while too:" "Why, how now,  
"Son Lavender," said Cramwell; "I  
"hope you are not tired of my girl al-  
"ready? Wounds! there is no metal  
"in your London blades; a good honest  
"dog

“ dog of a sportsman would a got me a  
 “ grandson by this time.” “ O fie ! Mr.  
 “ Cramwell,” cried Miss Puff, hiding her  
 face with her fan, “ how you talk : I won-  
 “ der you are not ashame’d !” “ Ashame’d  
 “ of a f—t,” replied the justice ; “ what  
 “ should I be ashame’d on ? What a  
 “ plague d’ye think I married the girl  
 “ for, but to have an heir to my estate,  
 “ and if I have not one, it won’t be her  
 “ fault, as I did not let her stay till she  
 “ was an old maid, like her neighbours.”

This answer was so directly pointed at  
 Miss Deborah, that it roused her anger :  
 she made a face half an ell long, fidgeted in  
 her chair, flirted her fan, and was going to  
 reply, when Mr. Aston, fearing she might  
 be too severe on the justice, prevented her,  
 by saying, “ You must excuse Mr. Cram-  
 “ well, Madam ; he does not consider that  
 “ ladies never grow old.” “ Well, well,”  
 said he, “ I know what I say, and what I  
 “ think ; but mum for that ; I wish the  
 “ dinner was ready. “ I am afraid, cou-  
 “ sin,” said lady Puff, “ your stomach is  
 “ too early for us to-day : what think you

" of a turn or two in the garden ? La-  
" dies, are you for walking ? " They  
answer'd, " By all means :" and Sir Po-  
sitive conducted them from the drawing-  
room to a large parterre, surrounded with  
yews and hollies in the shapes of birds,  
beasts and fishes. " I see," said young  
Aston, " you are not come into the mo-  
" dern way, Sir Positive, of throwing your  
" beds of flowers into a lawn." " No,  
" Sir," returned the knight; " I am an  
" utter enemy to all modern fashions."  
" Lord, what a difference there is between  
" you and I," said Mrs. Freemer; " for  
" I am quite bewitched to dear, dear fa-  
" shion." " And so am I, Ma'm, let me  
" die," cried the beau: " Then you are  
" both a couple of fools, I was going to  
" say, " replied Sir Positive; " but I  
" beg Mrs. Bride's pardon." " Pray, Sir,"  
" said Mrs. Freemer, " are you so very  
" partial to old fashions, as to prefer them  
" to new ones, if you could be convinc'd  
" of their being preferable ? " " But, Sir,"  
replied the knight, " I never can be con-  
" vinc'd; I never was convinc'd in my whole  
" life,

" life, and never will be convinc'd."

" Nay, then," said Mrs. Freemer, 'tis to  
" ou purpose to reason with you."

DURING this conversation, the justice and Mrs. Lavender had stepp'd to a wall cover'd with grapes, which they greedily devour'd : when they were join'd by their company, Mr. Lavender, who was extremely delicate, seem'd to be not a little shock'd at the eagerness of his lady's appetite ; and, being willing to recommend himself to Mrs. Freemer, whom he look'd upon as the only woman of taste present, cried, " Lord ! child, what are you about ? For God's sake, don't stuff so : " I vow you have had three or four " breakfasts to-day already." " No, indeed, my dear," replied she, " I have only drank tea with you since my milk-porridge, and had some toast and chocolate with lady Puff ; I have not eat a meal since, and you know tea always rakes my stomach so, that I am half famish'd after it." " My God," exclaim'd Mrs. Freemer, aside to Charlotte,

" did you hear the creature ?" But Charlotte only answer'd with a smile, that she was sorry to see a couple so ill match'd, and pitied the awkward wife, as much as she despised the effeminate husband.

SIR Positive having, by force, disengaged the justice from the vine, proposed a walk thro' the park, in order to take a view of some fish-ponds, at a convenient distance from which he had just erected a summer-house : but Mrs. Freemer objected to that proposal, because it was very sultry. " Why, you are a very dainty gentlewoman, indeed, my fine cousin," said he, " to be afraid of a little sun-shine. Sure I hope you don't hang out false colours? Isn't your complexion weather-proof ? " This speech disgusted both Mr. Freemer and his lady, who only turned up her lip in a contemptuous manner, and repeated the word Brute, loud enough to be heard by the beau, and he publickly declared himself to be of her opinion. " 'Tis enough to scorch one to death," said he, " to travel over such a vast length

" length of burning grass at high noon." He therefore with his deary, Mr. and Mrs. Freemer, Miss Deborah, Charlotte, and the counsellor, (who was quite enchanted with Charlotte) agreed to wait the return of Sir Positive and the rest, in a jesamin arbour.

SIR Positive and my lady conducted the Astons and justice Cramwell to the utmost extent of their grounds ; tho' my lady had now and then ventured to remonstrate, that they could not possibly return by two, and that she was afraid the dinner would be spoilt. The justice always join'd her with great vehemence, and declared, that if he had know Sir Positive's design to lead them such a dance, he would have pick'd a bit first to stay his stomach. The knight heard his lady and the justice very patiently, but made no answer ; being entirely taken up with showing his guests this hill he had raised, and that well he had sunk ; and they always expressed their approbation, for fear of prolonging the walk by a dispute.

WHILE Sir Positive was thus employed, Mr. Lavender was entertained by Mrs. Freemer with the state of the gay world ; and Miss Deborah improved herself, by asking questions relating to sacks, hoops, caps, ruffles and ribbons, of Charlotte ; who satisfied her curiosity in the most obliging manner ; for tho' she was not fond of such trifling topicks, she thought it always prudent to suit her conversation to the taste and capacity of her hearers. The counsellor, finding it impossible to engage Miss Puff on another subject, without being deem'd by her guilty of ill manners, did his best to amuse Mrs. Freemer, to whom Mrs. Lavender listen'd with eyes goggling and her mouth open.

THE bell rung for dinner almost an hour before Sir Positive returned : and then he was so warm and weary, that his temper was sour'd for the whole day. He began with finding fault with every thing at table ; for which the justice reprobred him, and declared that nothing was amiss but the haunch, which was rather overdone,

overdone, he said ; however he protested, filling his plate a second time, that his dinner should not be spoil'd for one dish. After a glass or two the ladies withdrew till five, when the tea assembled them together again ; Lavender too found an opportunity to elope till that time ; because he could not bear the fumes of the nasty wine and tobacco.

Poor Mrs. Lavender, having eat a plentiful dinner, which had not digested kindly, was quite overpower'd with the vapours, and press'd her husband to go home ; but he was quite intoxicated with the notice Mrs. Freemer took of him, and paid no regard to her complaints : he told her, carelessly, that she might have the coach, if she wou'd promise to send it back for him in theevening, and then left her to the care of her father ; who said, when he return'd to his company, " Poor Bid is " mortal sick, indeed : but the girl could " never away with feasting ; it would ne- " ver do with her." " Why," said lady Puff, " she has not been much us'd to

" it, Mr. Cramwell." " She has been  
 " us'd to all the company at my house ;"  
 replied the justice ; " not that I have a  
 " deal : she has not indeed had oppor-  
 " tunities of improving herself that some  
 " have ; but I always bred her as well as  
 " I could." " Aye, aye, and very well  
 " too," said Sir Positive ; " better breed  
 " her anything than a coquet. " Cock-et,"  
 replied the justice ; " I don't know what  
 " you mean : pray what is a cock-et ?  
 " Its no great matter if you never know ;  
 " but there are such animals in the world,  
 " and if I was in the place of their hus-  
 " bands, I know what I would do. — "

This speech being deliver'd with a look  
 at Mrs. Freemer, she thought it incum-  
 bent on her to answer it : " And pray,  
 " Sir Positive," said she, with a laughing  
 toss of her head, " what new method  
 " have you discover'd to reclaim a wife  
 " in such a case ? tho' I think you are an  
 " utter enemy to all modern inventions."  
 " Madam, madam," said the choleric  
 knight, " if I had the misfortune to be  
 " married to a handsome woman, I would  
     H  
     lock

" lock her up from the sight of all mankind,  
 " and forbid her the use of pen,  
 " ink and paper :" " Ridiculous !" cried Mrs. Freemer ; " and do you think  
 " such treatment would reform her ; no,  
 " no ; take my word for it, Sir Positive,  
 " she would only be ten times worse :  
 " to what purpose is it to be handsome,  
 " if one is not seen and admired?" " Very  
 " true, begad, Madam ; " said Lavender.  
 " But a good wife," said Mr. Freemer,  
 " will make her husband's happiness the  
 " ultimate end of her desires, and will  
 " not be more seen than he chuses she  
 " should be." " O monstrous ! " cried  
 Mrs. Freemer ; " is a husband to set  
 " bounds to a wife ? No, certainly." " A  
 " man may set bounds to his wife's con-  
 " duct, Madam," said the counsellor ;  
 " but it will be difficult to prescribe them  
 " to her admirers." " It's altogether im-  
 " possible, rat me," cried the beau. No  
 " man in the world can hinder me from  
 " admiring the finest woman in it, tho'  
 " he may be consumedly vexed at it."

This assertion of Lavender's was so visibly

addressed to Mrs. Freemer, that it spurr'd her on to reply with more than common vivacity. " You're in the right Mr. Lavender," said she ; " and every fine wo-  
 " man will be and ought to be admired.  
 " O there's a transport in being admired  
 " that beggars all description : to be sur-  
 " rounded with pretty fellows ; to have a  
 " thousand pretty things said to one ; and  
 " to see all the ugly things about one  
 " mortified : O Gad ! there's extasy in  
 " the very thought. Well, I confess I  
 " do love to raise envy." " And so do  
 " I, let me perish, Mem," cried Laven-  
 der ; " and to let you into a secret, I  
 " have met with infinite success that way  
 " in town : but Lard, in these rustic places  
 " one is absolutely buried alive ; there is  
 " not a well-drest young fellow in the  
 " county except myself ; nor did I light  
 " upon a woman fit to converse with, till  
 " I had the immense happiness of seeing  
 " you, Mem." This speech was accom-  
 panied with such conceited looks, and so  
 many contortions of the body, that it ex-  
 cited the involuntary mirth of the com-  
 pany ;

pany ; not even the knight could prevent his rigid muscles from relaxing ; tho' at the same time his indignation was so much raised against the insignificant beau, that he repeated the word Puppy several times with a great emphasis. Miss Deborah was also not a little nettled at the epithet Ugly, which Mrs. Freemer pronounced with a side glance at her wither'd countenance ; and declared, that women any ways pretty were always so conscious, and so liable to temptations, that she would not be handsome for all the world. " You're a fool, Deb," cried Sir Positive ; " when beauty is attended " with modesty and good sense, it is a va- " luable ornament ; but I can't bear to " see it accompanied with pride, sauci- " ness and folly." Here the counsellor sided with the knight ; but added that he knew women, who, by possessing the amiable qualities he mention'd and, without having any pretensions to beauty, had captivated hearts on which those most celebrated for their personal charms could never make an impression. As every wo-

man in the company, except Mrs. Free-  
mer, took this compliment to herself, tho' it was only intended for Charlotte, who alone seemed unconscious of deserving it, they simper'd approbation. Miss Deborah was particularly good-humour'd, and said, " To be sure, as my brother asserts, there is no harm in being hand-some; but I have heard fine gentlemen say, that if a woman is rich and good it is sufficient." The counsellor finding Charlotte, whom he wish'd to engage in conversation, still averse to speak, addressed himself particularly to her. " I am inclin'd to think, Madam, that you, as well as the rest of this agreeable circle, will subscribe to my opinion: If you will not, be so obliging as to tell me wherein we differ." As Charlotte had, from her first introduction to these odd characters, intended to listen more than to prattle, she was sorry he call'd upon her; but answer'd him with her usual politeness: " I did not imagine, Sir," said she, with a smile, " that a woman's opinion in this point was, in the least, material;

“ terial ; because, as the gentlemen alone  
 “ have the liberty of chusing, they cer-  
 “ tainly must know best what qualities  
 “ are most requisite to make them happy ;  
 “ but, as you seem desirous to have my  
 “ thoughts, I'll use no ceremony. I am  
 “ a good deal inclin'd to favour Sir Po-  
 “ sitive's way of thinking, and look upon  
 “ beauty not only as a very pleasing, but  
 “ a very desirable ornament ; and when  
 “ it does not make the possessor of it vain  
 “ and assuming, throws a grace over the  
 “ whole behaviour. Good sense flows with  
 “ double energy from a fine mouth ; and  
 “ wit (if the men will allow us any) receives  
 “ great poignancy from a pair of spirited  
 “ eyes : nay, even a blush is most becom-  
 “ ing, when it overspreads a clear com-  
 “ plexion.” “ I am sure, Madam,” said  
 the counsellor, “ I deserve the thanks of  
 “ the company for prevailing on the lady  
 “ to describe so elegantly.” Ay, ay,” in-  
 terrupted the knight, “ and you shall have  
 “ mine too, Madam. I am pleased with  
 “ you, and shall be glad to see and hear  
 “ you often.” Charlotte only answer'd

with a bow ; but the looks of complacency with which it was accompanied, entirely won the counsellor's heart, who spent the remainder of the evening in trying to let her see they had. Towards the latter part of the above dialogue, Mr. Justice fell asleep ; but when the knight had done speaking to Charlotte, he gave him a great thump on the back, and cried, “ Yo ho !  
 “ Master Cramwell ; why, what a pox,  
 “ can't you eat a pound or two of ven' son,  
 “ without being so confounded drowsy af-  
 “ ter it ? Why, man, here have been some  
 “ good things said.” “ Aw-h,” cried  
 the justice, stretching himself, “ you have  
 “ rouz'd me from the finest dream, Sir  
 “ Positive. I thought I was just set down  
 “ to a curious brace of carp.” “ Pshaw,  
 “ plague on your visions, said the knight ;  
 “ one would indeed swear you was begot  
 “ by that gluttonous dog Heliogabalus.  
 “ I'll be damn'd if you ever think of any  
 “ thing but eating.”

WHEN the evening approach'd, Mr. and Mrs. Aston took their leave ; the coun-

counsellor beg'd Charlotte to permit him to visit her at Aston-park : she civilly denied his request : he then offer'd to wait on her in town ; she told him, that her acquaintance was numerous, and that she did not chuse to increase it. The poor counsellor was as much dash'd, by her forbidding replies, as if he had met with a rebuff at the bar.

WHEN Charlotte return'd home, she found a long letter from Mrs. Ramsden, in which she gave a particular account of her meeting the amiable Maria, and then proceeded in the following manner : " I  
 " have not seen Welford once, tho' I have  
 " often been to Mrs. Deacon's in hopes  
 " of meeting with him ; his uncle is in  
 " town, and constantly engages him about  
 " business : however, Mr. Ramfden and  
 " I have both desir'd her to bring him to  
 " our house when he is at leisure. By  
 " what I can sift out of Mrs. Deacon, he  
 " has drop'd Maria's acquaintance, as he  
 " had no intention in favour of her, and  
 " has given up his trust to her and a gen-  
 " tleman,

" Gentleman, who was appointed her guardian in case of his refusal. I have talk'd  
 " a good deal with Maria, and find she  
 " has always lov'd Welford : she always  
 " speaks of him in the highest terms : but  
 " Mrs. Deacon seems to favour young  
 " Aston's addresses, and to resent Wel-  
 " ford's indifference. I asked Maria t'o-  
 " ther day, if she ever heard him mention  
 " Miss Egerton's name ; she answer'd no,  
 " but believ'd he liked her : I am there-  
 " fore still inclin'd to think that you will  
 " be happy with him at last. Mr. and  
 " Mrs. Frankly are at Bath : I am just re-  
 " turn'd from a little tour I made with  
 " them into Hertfordshire ; otherwise I  
 " should have wrote to you sooner."

THIS letter was far from giving Charlotte the satisfaction she expected. On the next day she receiv'd another ; but of a very different nature : it was, in short, penn'd by the counsellor, and contain'd a formal declaration of his passion in a high-flown ridiculous style ; for he was resolv-ed that she should see what she would not hear.

hear. At any other time his *billet doux* would have diverted her, but the suspense she was in about Welford wholly engrossed her attention : however, she shew'd it to Mr. Aston, and acquainted him with all the writer's proceedings : she also inform'd him, at the same time, of her intention to leave Aston park the week following. Mr. Aston was delighted with this proof of her confidence, and entreated her to stay with him a little longer ; but she beg'd to be excus'd : " Nay," said Mrs. Aston, " we are invited by Mrs. Freem'er to accompany him and my daughter to Shropshire in a fortnight, and I am sure Betsy will be excessively glad to have Miss Egerton of the party." Charlotte told them she must defer that pleasure till another opportunity ; " But," said she, " I will show Mrs. Freem'er my love-letter ; for I don't doubt but it will divert her." She then went into Mrs. Freem'er's apartment, who cried, as soon as she enter'd the room, " O Charlotte ! I am glad you are come to decide a dispute between him and I,

(pointing)

“ (pointing to her husband) and I am  
 “ certain you will be on my side.” “ I  
 “ am not so certain of that,” said Charlotte ; “ but I have no time now to en-  
 “ ter into disputes ; I have a diverting af-  
 “ fair to impart to you.” “ O, but you  
 “ must hear how it began,” said Mrs.  
 Freemer. “ Pray, my dear,” said Mr.  
 Freemer, “ let us hear no more of it ;  
 “ it shall be as you please ; I have already  
 “ told you so.” “ No matter for that,”  
 cried Mrs. Freemer ; “ I know you think  
 “ me in the wrong, and I will vindicate  
 “ myself. You must know,” continued  
 she, to Charlotte, “ that my mama told  
 “ me this morning, after breakfast, Mr.  
 “ Freemer had invited her and my papa  
 “ to spend a few months with us in Shrop-  
 “ shire ; and that he talk’d of setting out  
 “ in a fortnight. I was very much sur-  
 “ priz’d, you may be sure, to find he had  
 “ taken such a resolution without my  
 “ knowledge ; and therefore told him just  
 “ now, that I should go to town next week,  
 “ and desir’d he would order his people  
 “ to have every thing in readiness : he  
 “ pre-

“ pretends to wonder at my behaviour, and  
“ is actually angry about it.” “ I am not  
“ angry, my dear,” said he, “ I was sur-  
“ priz’d to hear you talkof going to town ;  
“ because I understood that we were to  
“ spend the winter in Shropshire, and to  
“ go thither in spring ; but since you dis-  
“ like a country-scheme, I will attend you  
“ to London as soon as you please.”  
“ Pass the winter in Shropshire ! O my  
“ God !” cried Mrs. Freemer ; “ the very  
“ idea of it gives me the vapours. I can’t,  
“ for my life, think how it came into  
“ your head.” I am very sorry, my love,”  
said Mr. Freemer, “ that you do not ap-  
“ prove of it ; because I had promised  
“ my self a great deal of satisfaction, by  
“ carrying so amiable a creature among  
“ so many of my friends, who wish to be  
“ acquainted with her.” “ Do you hear  
“ him ? ” said she to Charlotte ; “ and  
“ you expected (turning to him) that I  
“ should tamely go down to your manor-  
“ house, to be presented, as a raree-show,  
“ at your aukward neighbours ? But you  
“ happen to be mistaken, Sir ; I married  
“ for

" for my own pleasure, as well as yours ;  
 " and will absolutely never be rusti-  
 " cated." This speech was deliver'd in  
 so peremptory a manner, that it some-  
 what stagger'd Mr. Freemer, who did not  
 imagine his lady would run such lengths,  
 tho' he knew she was very self-willed, e-  
 specially before a third person : he there-  
 fore thought proper to decamp, till he  
 could find a better opportunity to con-  
 vince the dear creature that she was not  
 quite in the right. As soon as he left  
 the room, Mrs. Freemer said, " See there,  
 " Charlotte, what it is to be married :  
 " you must have no will of your own ;  
 " but I am resolved to break through at  
 " once : I've been govern'd long enough,  
 " and will be my own mistress now, or  
 " perish in the attempt." " Indeed, my  
 " dear Mrs. Freemer," said Charlotte,  
 " I am very sorry I happen'd to come in  
 " at this unlucky moment, and more sor-  
 " ry that there has been any difference  
 " between you already." " Law, child,"  
 cried she, laughing, " how you talk ?  
 " why, pray, did we ever agree in one in-  
" dividual

“ dividual thing ? Nay, I don’t believe  
“ we ever shall.” “ Then it was pity  
“ you ever came together,” said Charlotte.  
“ Why, aye,” cried Mrs. Freemer, “ you  
“ know I always thought so, but my wise  
“ papa and mama were of a different opi-  
“ nion ; but for heaven’s sake, let us  
“ change the subject ; what have you got  
“ in your hand there, my dear ?” Charlotte  
then gave her the letter : before she  
had read it half through, she cried, “ But  
“ don’t you think I have carried my  
“ point ? Oh dear, dear London ! how  
“ shall I rejoice to see thee again ; and  
“ so, Charlotte, all this stuff comes from  
“ that coxcomb the counsellor. What,  
“ do you intend to take him ? Aye, aye ;  
“ my wretch began to give himself airs  
“ that very day, only because I chatted a  
“ little to poor Lavender ; who, by the  
“ way, is a very flimsy thing.” “ Why  
“ then, my dear,” said Charlotte, “ would  
“ you make the man who truly loves you,  
“ and who is intitled to your esteem, why  
“ would you make him uneasy about a  
“ creature whom you despise.” “ For  
“ this

" this plain reason," said she ; " because  
 " he is such a fool as to be uneasy."  
 " Fie, fie," said Charlotte ; " moderate  
 " your vivacity, I beseech you, and pay  
 " some regard to so deserving a man."  
 " Nay now, this is insufferable," said she ;  
 " you talk just like Mrs. Ramsden ; I  
 " suppose I shall be finely documented  
 " between you both : but any thing is  
 " better than being trundled down to  
 " Shropshire ; where I must be stuck out  
 " the first Sunday at church, to be gaped  
 " at by my husband's rustic relations and  
 " clownish tenants ; and then I must re-  
 " ceive the visits of every body who will  
 " honour me so far. The parson's wife  
 " and daughter, the justice's lady, follow-  
 " ed by a crew of thick-headed 'squires,  
 " who will stink me to death with ale  
 " and tobacco ; fogh ! " " You have a  
 " mind to divert yourself," said Char-  
 lotte, " by giving way to the liveli-  
 " ness of your imagination ; but I am  
 " sure Mr. Freemer is too well-bred to  
 " keep such company." " Lord, child !  
 said she, " what other company can there  
 " be

" be in the country ? I always detested  
 " it, and will never be shut up in it by my  
 " husband : besides, if I loved it of all  
 " things, I would not give him his way."

THE arrival of some visitors put a stop to Mrs. Freemer's vehemence, and seasonably relieved Charlotte, who was sorry to be a witness of matrimonial disputes. She long'd as much as her lively friend to go to town, but on a very different account. At length the wish'd-for day arrived. The complaisant Mr. Freemer, not being able to prevail on his lady to go with him to Shropshire, went patiently, in appearance, along with her to London. They had a place in their coach for Charlotte, and were attended by young Aston on horseback. The old gentleman and lady parted with them very unwillingly ; but, as the weather continued fine, chose to spend another month at the park.

NOTHING material happen'd on the road excepting a few altercations between Mrs. Freemer. Wherever they stopp'd

stopp'd for refreshment, they met the counsellor, to whom they were forced to be civil, as they had spent a day so lately with him. But when they came to their journey's end, Charlotte was particularly teiz'd with his company; for he would insist on knowing where she lodged; nor could she, without the greatest difficulty, prevent him from following her.

THE morning after Charlotte arrived at her lodgings, she was visited by her old friend Mrs. Ramsden, whom she had acquainted with the day of her setting out from Afton-park. She was excessively pleased at the sight of her, after an absence which she thought very long. When they had chatted about an hour together, Mr. Ramsden came to see how she did after her journey, and said, in his familiar way, "I am come to breakfast with you, Miss Egerton, if you will give me leave." Charlotte receiv'd him with a real satisfaction, as she had never desired Mrs. Ramsden to keep any secrets from him. The conversation turn'd chiefly on the

the various scenes she had met with during her stay in the country ; and Welford had no small share in it. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsden both own'd, that his behaviour was strange and unaccountable ; yet they doubted not but there would be an explanation of it at last, answerable to her wishes. This animating assurance, and their cheerful society, very much contributed to enliven Charlotte, who asked them to go with her in the afternoon to Mrs. Deacon's, being impatient to see Maria : but Mrs. Ramsden said, " O, my dear, you forget  
 " that we have a much more important  
 " visit to pay. Mrs. Freemer you say  
 " brought you to town : she won't ex-  
 " pect us to stand upon ceremony : " Be-  
 " sides," said Mrs. Ramsden, " I long  
 " to see how matrimony agrees with my  
 " wild cousin. Pray, Miss Egerton, give  
 " us a little sketch of her, in her new  
 " trammels ; I dare say you can draw her  
 " to the life." " Indeed, Sir," said Charlotte, " I must beg to be excus'd ; see her  
 " yourself, and then we will compare  
 " notes. I'll lay a pound of tea to a  
 Vol. II. I pinch

" pinch of snuff, Lyddy," said he, " by  
 " Miss Egerton's looks, that poor Free-  
 " mer is managed by her already. I  
 " know the girl had always a mighty  
 " notion of arbitrary power; and if he  
 " gives her her way at first, he will find  
 " it a hard matter to keep her under."  
 " So, so," said Mrs. Ramsden, laughing;  
 " very pretty indeed; then I find we fe-  
 " males ought not to do as we please:  
 " and I suppose, if I was to prove refrac-  
 " tory, you would soon take down my  
 " pride?" " Ay, to be sure," said he;  
 " but, my dear, you are so perfectly a-  
 " miable, that I know you will never give  
 " me opportunity to exert my husbandly  
 " authority. In short, I don't believe  
 " 'tis possible to provoke you to commit  
 " the most trifling fault." " Ah!" cried  
 she, " don't flatter me too much, my  
 " dear; I am guilty of numberless errors,  
 " but your good opinion of me will not  
 " let you see them." " How different,"  
 said Charlotte, " are you two, from the  
 " couple I have just quitted: and how  
 " like us will you and Welford be when-

" ever

"ever you come together," said Mr. Ramsden. "Hush!" said Charlotte; "don't let me think of impossibilities. But before we part," continued she, (blushing) "let me know if you can, where he is at present." "He set out for Bath," said Mr. Ramsden, the day before yesterday; so that in all probability, Frankly will be able to give us some account of him" Here Charlotte met with a new disappointment: she went, however, in the afternoon to Mrs. Deacon, who receiv'd her very politely, and Miss Peterson's heart leap'd for joy at the sight of her. This young lady had observed, at Aston-park, that Welford was very much pleased with Charlotte, and that would have been sufficient to make her worthy of her esteem, if she had not been prepossessed in her favour.

MARIA had no notion of jealousy: she loved Welford too disinterestedly to harbour that passion, and as she knew he would never be hers, took a melancholy

pleasure in seeing him happy with another. With this disposition she could not but be charm'd with Charlotte, who cultivated an intimacy with her, in order to have an opportunity of conversing freely about him. In short, they grew so fond of each other, that they were seldom a-funder. Mr. Ramsden, in the mean time, receiv'd a letter from Mr. Frankly at Bath, wherein he told him that he had not seen Welford, who only lay one night at Bath, and set out early the next morning for Bristol; but said, he was expected there again soon.

THIS news Charlotte communicated to Maria, and by the affability of her behaviour so entirely gain'd her confidence, that she one day pour'd out her whole heart to her, and complained of the uneasiness she suffered from young Aston's addresses, in these terms : " Why would they  
 " oblige me to marry a man I cannot  
 " like ? Mr. Aston, they say, is good  
 " and agreeable ; they say too he loves  
 " me. I don't deny it ; but if I cannot  
 " return

" return his love, to what purpose should  
 " I marry him?" " They cannot oblige  
 " you to marry him," said Charlotte;  
 " no body, my dear, has power over an-  
 " other's inclinations; and I am well as-  
 " sur'd neither of your sisters would ex-  
 " pect you should sacrifice yours." " My  
 " sisters," said she, " are both very kind  
 " and considerate, and would not, I believe,  
 " expect me to act in that manner. My  
 " aunt is also very kind, but she is Mr.  
 " Aston's friend, and I fear he has one  
 " still more powerful; for Welford, you  
 " know, is fond of him, and will not be  
 " pleas'd with my refusing a person whom  
 " he recommended." " Does Mr. Wel-  
 " ford then know that Mr. Aston is not  
 " agreeable to you," said Charlotte,"  
 " and yet persist in desiring you to re-  
 " ceive his addresses? I am sorry for it;  
 " I had always entertained a better op-  
 " nion of him, than to imagine he would  
 " persuade you to act so contrary to your  
 " inclination in so material a point."  
 " Ah! don't be angry with him, my  
 " dear Miss Egerton," said Maria, " I

" am sure you ought not to be angry  
 " with him, because you are his favou-  
 " rite ; besides, how can he help my not  
 " liking Mr. Aston, any more than he  
 " can help not liking me himself ? I am  
 " very unhappy--indeed I am, about  
 " them. Why did I leave Brussels, where  
 " I passed many chearful hours till I saw  
 " Welford ? " " Do you then repent  
 " of having left Brussels with Welford ?  
 " Do you wish you had staid there with-  
 " out him ? Are you not happy in find-  
 " ing two sisters and an aunt in Eng-  
 " land, who, I cannot think, will ever  
 " consent to a match which you so much  
 " object to." "I don't repent of my com-  
 " ing to England," said Maria, wiping  
 her eyes ; " for I could not have been  
 " happy at Brussels, after the death of my  
 " dear papa ; when I lost him, I lost my only  
 " comfort : yet why do I ramble so ; Mr.  
 " Welford has not yet given me up ; he  
 " is a man of honour, and will be a father  
 " to me, tho' he cannot be a husband."

This affecting speech of Maria's touch'd Charlotte extremely ; she thought there was  
 a great

a great resemblance between herself and the amiable girl, and could not prevent her tears from flowing as fast as her's. Maria was pleased with her dear friend's compassion, but fear'd she might be too much afflicted, and therefore endeavour'd to apologize for venting her griefs. "No apology is wanting," said Charlotte, "nay, you oblige me, by giving me an opportunity to indulge my own sorrow for the death of an excellent father: he was more, he was my friend, my companion, my all." Here her tears gush'd out again, and hinder'd her from proceeding. It was a long time before they could recover from this mournful silence: Charlotte, at last broke it, but would not revive so gloomy a subject; and therefore asked Maria what she meant by calling her Welford's favourite? "I call'd you Welford's favourite," said she, "because I never saw him take so much notice of any lady before: he never cared to walk or converse with any other person: nay, Miss and her brother often said, they believed he was in love with you:

" I beg then, my dear Miss Egerton,  
 " you will be so much my friend as to tell  
 " him I cannot love Aston, and that I  
 " wish earnestly never to be married at  
 " all." Charlotte blush'd prodigiously  
 at the beginning of Maria's speech, but  
 sighed at the conclusion of it, and, with  
 a melancholy air, replied, " Why do  
 " you thus talk to me, my dear Ma-  
 " ria, I may perhaps never see Welford;  
 " but suppose I should, I cannot have the  
 " influence over him you imagine. I am  
 " far from being agreeable to him. Don't  
 " you know that he left Aston-park,  
 " without treating me with common civi-  
 " lity, without once bidding me adieu?"  
 " Did he indeed leave you so unkindly?"  
 said Maria. " Could Welford, who is so  
 " kind and obliging to all, behave so to  
 " Miss Egerton?" " He did, indeed,"  
 said Charlotte; " but I never could learn  
 " for what reason. You saw him often  
 " before he went to Bath; did he never  
 " tell you he was displeased with me?"  
 " No," replied she, " he never mention'd  
 " your name: he only recommended his  
     " friend

" friend earnestly to me, during the short  
 " time we were together, which was not  
 " above half an hour in the whole fort-  
 " night he stay'd in town." Charlotte,  
 tho' she could learn nothing satisfactory  
 about Welford, except that he was not in  
 love with Maria, took a great deal of  
 pleasure in talking of him: and the con-  
 versation between her and Miss Peterson  
 would, in all probability, have lasted much  
 longer, had not Mrs. Deacon, who left her  
 niece with her while she paid some formal  
 visits, called for her sooner than she ex-  
 pected. The young ladies parted with a  
 promise to meet again next day, when  
 Charlotte intended to carry Maria to Mrs.  
 Freemer's.

CHARLOTTE's intentions were frustrat-  
 ed ; for she receiv'd herself a most unex-  
 pected visit. Just when she was going  
 to set out, her servant told her that a gen-  
 tleman desired to see her, but refused to  
 send up his name. As their thoughts  
 were constantly employ'd about Welford,  
 she at first encouraged a hope that he

might be the visiter ; but, that hope was soon excluded, when the servant added,  
 " He is an old gentleman, Madam,  
 " dress'd frightfully, and seems in a violent passion."

A GREAT hobbling on the stairs, attended with frequent groans and curses, kept her some time in suspense ; at last, a tall figure, with an ivory crutch in his hand, appear'd, dress'd in a very antient suit of clothes, ornamented with gold buttons and holes : a scarlet cloak trimm'd with gold hung on his shoulders, and an immense flaxen periwig adorn'd his head ; over which was slouch'd a black velvet cap, that almost cover'd the uncouth visage of Sir Positive Puff, who accosted her thus :

" Your servant, young lady ; I believe  
 " you did not expect to see me ;—but  
 " that's not to the purpose ;—that's neither here nor there—I have a mind to  
 " talk to you, Madam, and was cursedly afraid that that fellow of yours would deny

" deny you. I know it is the custom in  
 " London ; for tho' I come to town but  
 " seldom, I am not quite so ignorant  
 " as some people may think."

**CHARLOTTE** was a little surpriz'd at  
 the knight's appearance, and at his pre-  
 amble, but receiv'd him very good-natur-  
 edly, enquired after his lady and sister, and  
 ask'd what brought him to town.

" **WHY, Madam,**" said he, " I came  
 " in Mr. justice's coach. That silly dog,  
 " Lavender, whom you saw at my house,  
 " will have no rest till he has squander'd  
 " away the best part of his estate in pig-  
 " tails and pomatum, solitaires and  
 " sword-knots ; nay, I believe the puppy  
 " bedaub'd his face too : therefore he has  
 " brought his wife to town, because my  
 " old neighbour would not consent to  
 " his leaving her behind ; and, as they  
 " had a corner of the coach to spare, and  
 " knew I had business in town, they per-  
 " suaded me to accept of it, tho' Roger  
 " told me my own horses would have

" been able to travel in a fortnight : but,  
 " damn me, as lame as I am, if I had  
 " not rather have walked half the way, than  
 " have been cooped up with three such  
 " companions : for the poor girl spewed  
 " all the way after the first mile, which  
 " offended her powder-puff of a husband  
 " to such a degree, that he had never his  
 " essence from his nose ; which, with his  
 " scented handkerchief, and the justice's  
 " quids that he ever and anon belched  
 " out in my face, made such a compound  
 " of villainous smells, as old Falstaff  
 " has it, that I'll be damn'd if ever a  
 " cheesemonger or tallow-chandler in the  
 " kingdom could have bore it. Had not  
 " my hellish toe every now and then gi-  
 " ven me a twinge, I should have been  
 " upon my feet in an instant : but this is  
 " not the business I came about, Madam.  
 " You know my lady's cousin, young  
 " Williams ; I found how it was with him  
 " before you left us ; and indeed I am  
 " not surprised at it, for you are a very  
 " sensible, decent young woman ; the very  
 " reverse of my hoity toity cousin, there ;  
 " and

“ and I am not surprised, I say, that the  
“ young fellow likes you : but what the  
“ devil makes you so very shy ? Why,  
“ he is a sober dog, minds his business,  
“ and has a pretty fortune of his own ;  
“ and if he wins you, perhaps I may leave  
“ him a good fat legacy : 'tis true, he is  
“ my wife's relation ; but I have no child.  
“ There's none but Deb, and she won't  
“ marry now ; therefore the lawyer may  
“ expect something handsome : so, Ma-  
“ dam, I would advise you not to carry  
“ so much indifference about you : let  
“ me tell you, a young woman makes  
“ but a scurvy figure when she has with-  
“ stood her market.”

CHARLOTTE had listen'd very attentive-  
ly to the knight's speech, and when it was  
finish'd told him she was extremely oblig'd  
to him for his good opinion, but gave  
him to understand that she had no inten-  
tions, just at that time, to change her way  
of life ; hoping he would not take her re-  
fusal of Mr. Williams as any affront to  
himself or his family. “ Nay, nay, Ma-  
“ dam,”

" dam," said Sir Positive, " please yourself  
 " and you please me. I should not have  
 " interfered in this affair, but that the  
 " young fellow has been with me twice  
 " or thrice since I came to town, and com-  
 " plained that you would not answer his  
 " letter, and denied when you were at  
 " home. He begg'd I would speak a good  
 " word for him, which I would not have  
 " done to any other woman in the king-  
 " dom, let me tell you, Madam." " Why  
 " so, Sir," said Charlotte; " there are  
 " many very deserving women." " Ay,  
 " ay," replied Sir Positive; " may be so,  
 " may be so : Pox take me, tho', if I  
 " know where they are to be found.  
 " Why now, I'll tell you my opinion free-  
 " ly of the greatest part of your sex :  
 " they are a pack of saucy, idle, flaunting,  
 " good-for-nothing bitches." " O dear,  
 " Sir Positive," said Charlotte, " have a  
 " little charity ; I am afraid you have  
 " fallen into bad hands, because you are  
 " so severe." Severe, with a pox," said  
 he ; " no, no ; when you hear what re-  
 " ception I have met with from my dain-

" ty

" ty cousin, Mrs. Freemer, you will not  
" think me too severe, I believe. You  
" must know, Madam, tho' I hate cere-  
" mony as I hate the devil, yet when I  
" was in town, I thought it would not  
" be civil to leave it without paying her  
" a visit ; so I went about twelve o' clock,  
" and knock'd at the door, which was  
" open'd by a pig-tail puppy, who upon  
" my asking if his master and mistres  
" were at home, answer'd, " I don't  
" know, but I'll go and see : upon which  
" I said, I see you you lie damnable,  
" Sir, and thrust myself by him, and be-  
" gan to march up stairs ; when the noise  
" I made with my stick alarm'd Madam  
" and her company, and brought out an-  
" other of her monkeys, who, upon the  
" sight of me, ran back again and flung  
" the door in my face, and presently they  
" set up such a peal of laughter, that one  
" would have thought all hell was broke  
" loose : however, I was determin'd to  
" go on, and so enter'd Madam's apart-  
" ment, where I found the dear creature  
" in her bed gown and slippers, surround-

" ed

“ ed with a set of giggling flirts and em-  
“ broider’d coxcombs, who set up a se-  
“ cond shout at my appearance ; upon  
“ which I look’d confounded sour ; some  
“ cramm’d their handkerchiefs into their  
“ mouths, and other went to the window.  
“ Zounds ! Madam,” said I, to my cou-  
“ sin, “ what do you see in me so ridicu-  
“ lous to sneer at ? I came out of pure  
“ friendship to you and your husband :  
“ What, isn’t he at home ? Damn me,  
“ if I should wonder if he never came  
“ home when his house is so beset. They  
“ all stared at this speech, which a little  
“ disconcerted my lady cousin : I thought,  
“ however, she said, he had not been gone  
“ out long, and would return presently,  
“ she believed : so I sat me down, intend-  
“ ing to wait for him ; and now you  
“ know one would have expected some-  
“ thing like conversation ; but the devil  
“ a bit. The whole attention of the com-  
“ pany was fix’d on a little black bitch  
“ that lay stretch’d on the ground. One  
“ squeak’d out praises on its fine ears ;  
“ another lisped an encomium on the fine  
“ bright-

“ brightness of its coat ; and an imperti-  
“ nent chatter-basket, whom they call La-  
“ dy Di,—Lady Devil say I,—cried out,  
“ my dear sweet precious Hummy, thou  
“ art prodigiously happy in being so ad-  
“ mir'd.” “ Indeed and so I vow he is,  
“ Mem, said a sneaking Fribble, no  
“ higher than my cane, with his hair  
“ frizled above his ears, which made him  
“ look like a jack-ass ; how came your  
“ la'ship to call the superlatively pretty  
“ creature Hummy : it is, in my humble  
“ conceit, a mighty whimsical name.”  
“ Oh !” cried she, tittering like an idiot,  
“ I am obliged to colonel Prancer for the  
“ thought. You must know when the  
“ delicious bitch lay in, I sent cards to  
“ all my acquaintance to come and name  
“ the puppies ; so we met and were vast-  
“ ly merry : every one thought of a name  
“ for the puppy they were to have, and  
“ this was left for me : I could not bear  
“ any name that was in the least vulgar ;  
“ so that Harly, Fidele, Trip, and twenty  
“ others were rejected, and I was half dis-  
“ tracted what to fix upon ; at last the  
“ colonel

" colonel proposed Humbug : now you  
 " know that was vastly odd and out-  
 " of-the-way ; but as it was too rough,  
 " and put me in mind of a filthy animal,  
 " I alter'd it to Hummy. Vastly en-  
 " enchanting ! he he, he, he !" said the  
 oaf ; " upon which I fix'd my eyes full  
 " upon his face, and was going to correct  
 " him for his folly ; but, upon a nearer  
 " view, I discover'd such a total vacuity  
 " of understanding in it, and such a mix-  
 " ture of vanity and wantonness and im-  
 " pertinence in all the females, that I  
 " could bear it no longer : so got up in a  
 " hurry, and made the best of my way  
 " down stairs, cursing their nonsense, and  
 " pitying the poor good-natur'd husband,  
 " who suffer'd his house to be haunted by  
 " such a set of locusts."

CHARLOTTE could not forbear smiling  
 at the knight's relation of his visit, and  
 said, in order to excuse Mrs. Freemer,  
 " I cannot think that she intended any  
 " affront. As to admiring the the little  
 " creature, it was an innocent amuse-  
 " ment,

" ment, and more excusable than admir-  
" ing themselves. "Innocent" cried the  
knight ; " what you would infer from  
" thence that every thing which is inno-  
" rent is laudable ; but I am of a different  
" opinion : you may do a great many  
" things not absolutely criminal, but they  
" may be damn'd silly tho'." He was in-  
terrupted here by Mrs. Ramsden, who  
came to invite Charlotte to supper : and,  
notwithstanding she made a very engag-  
ing appearance, the old knight did not  
care to encounter another woman, after  
the provocations he had received at  
Mrs. Freemer's, and therefore went a-  
way.

CHARLOTTE highly diverted her friend  
with an account of the knight's visit ; and  
she in return show'd her a letter she had re-  
ceiv'd that morning from Mrs. Frankly,  
wherein she inform'd her that Welford  
was then at Bath ; that she had seen him  
several times at the rooms, and thought  
him very agreeable. Charlotte expected,  
from

from this preamble, to hear something more particular; but was again disappointed. She promised Mrs. Ramsden to sup with her after she had been to Mrs. Freemer, with whom she and Maria were to drink tea; and Mrs. Ramsden soon afterwards left her to her dressing-table.

WHEN Charlotte and Maria went to Mrs. Freemer, she cried out as soon as they enter'd the room, " Oh, Charlotte ! I'll give you a month to guess who has been to see me lately." " I shall not require so much time, I believe, my dear," said Charlotte ; " for I'll lay a wager, Sir Positive Puff was your visiter." " Lord, child," said Mrs. Freemer, " you certainly deal with the devil, or you could never have pitched so readily upon the identical person—such a barbarian—so foreign to all breeding—I had a pretty circle of friends here; lady Di Ogle, Miss Whimsy, captain Finick and Harry Simper. When the Hottentot burst in upon us, to be sure we were all ready dy

" dy to choak ourselves with laughing at  
 " his preposterous dress ; such a grotesque  
 " figure ! and not knowing what in the  
 " world to say to him, we prated about  
 " lady Di's Hummy : which so provok'd  
 " the old churl, that I thought he would  
 " have devoured us ; nay, he look'd so  
 " fierce at poor Simper, that I don't be-  
 " lieve he has recover'd his spirits yet.—  
 " But the jest of all is, that I have re-  
 " ceiv'd a letter from mama this morn-  
 " ing, who tells me the sweet Miss De-  
 " borah has taken the opportunity of  
 " her brother's absence to go off with  
 " his coachman. I hope the old cormud-  
 " geon has heard the news : oh ! it will  
 " ga'l him finely." This is very extra-  
 " ordinary news, indeed," said Charlotte :  
 " Not at all," replied Mrs. Freemer ;  
 " I always expected it. They came to  
 " town the day after he left Kent, were  
 " married in the privatest manner, and set  
 " out for Bath directly. This comes of  
 " locking up women——a tyrannical  
 " brute."

" THE

THE entrance of other ladies gave a turn to the conversation ; but when they went away, Mrs. Freemer told Charlotte, she would carry her and Miss Peterson, if they pleased, to Mrs. Ramsden's, as Mr. Freemer was engaged to sup abroad. They willingly consented, and the coach was order'd. They set out about nine, and were within a hundred yards of Mr. Ramsden's house, when a hackney-coach, which rattled along as fast as the horses could draw it, ran against their coach with such violence, that it overturn'd it and their man off his box. The cries of Mrs. Freemer and Miss Peterson soon brought a crowd about them. The person who was in the hack immediately jumped out, and flew to their assistance. But how was he surpriz'd, when the first object his eyes beheld was Charlotte in a swoon ! He instantly cried out, " Good God !" and endeavour'd to raise her. Mr. Ramsden and his servants assisted him ; and while he conducted her to his house,

house, they staid to help the other ladies.

WHEN Charlotte was seated in a chair, the gentleman said to Mrs. Ramsden, with a look of infinite concern and a fault'ring voice, “ I beg, Madam, that a surgeon may be immediately sent for : I am greatly interested in this lady's recovery, and am afraid she is dangerously hurt.” Mrs. Ramsden, who was both frightened and grieved at the condition she saw Charlotte in, readily acquiesced, and upon looking very earnestly at him, thought she had seen him somewhere before ; but could not recollect where. Miss Peterson and Mrs. Freemer, who were recovered from their fright, ran to Charlotte, when the former viewing the stranger more nearly cried out, “ Mr. Welford ! Mr. Welford ! ” echo'd the latter—blefs me ! is it you who have done all this mischief.” “ I am indeed the unhappy, but innocent cause of it, Madam,” said he ; he then turn'd to Charlotte,

Charlotte, and with a countenance on which love, grief and astonishment were all strongly painted, said, " O Charlotte ! " if I have undesignedly occasion'd the destruction of all that's dear to me, life will be no longer desirable." By the help of hartshorn, salts, and other awaking medicines, Charlotte came to herself. Welford, who had applied them with a particular assiduity, when he found she stirr'd gently, pressed her hand between both his, and again tenderly call'd upon her. " O Charlotte ! " said he, " how do you find yourself ? Look up my dearest ! do you know me ? " She recollect'd his voice, and fixing her eyes wildly on him for a few moments, answer'd faintly, " I thought, Mr. Welford, you were at Bath." This instance of recollection gave him a pleasure not to be described ; as it encouraged him to hope that she was not dangerously hurt. He therefore chearfully replied, " Would I had been there now ; for then this fair might not have happen'd : but my impatience to see you, to ask your for-  
giveness,

" givenefs, and to entreat your reconcili-  
 " ation, would not suffer me to linger  
 " there." He was hinder'd from proceeding,  
 by the surgeon's arrival, who said she  
 must be bleded directly. Mrs. Ramsden  
 fearing that the sudden appearance  
 of Welford might be too affecting, as she  
 was in so weak a condition, made a pro-  
 posal to him and the company to quit the  
 room, till her spirits had recover'd from  
 their shock. All went accordingly, ex-  
 cept Welford. He could not be prevail'd  
 on to leave the room, but supported Char-  
 lotte in his arms, during the operation ;  
 and show'd so much tenderness and con-  
 cern, that Mrs. Ramsden was thoroughly  
 satisfied with him. Poor Charlotte was  
 quite at a loss ; she could not account for  
 his sudden arrival. The sight of him at the  
 time she concluded he was at Bath, and the  
 regard he profess'd, at a time she imagin'd  
 he was displeased with her, threw her into  
 a labyrinth of thoughts : however, she  
 gave herself up to the joy she felt at  
 his presence and behaviour, and endea-  
 vour'd

vour'd to wait patiently for the unravelling of the plot.

MARIA was in a different situation ; for tho' she had all along believed that Charlotte had gain'd a heart on which she could herself never make an impression, the assurances she constantly had given her to the contrary, puzzled her to account for the sudden familiarity between her and Welford : she also thought that, as she had met with the same unfortunate accident, she was intitled to the notice and compassion generally bestowed on such occasions : she could not therefore bear to be any longer absent from so interesting a scene, and returned with Mrs. Freemer, to see Welford, in fact, tho' she was willing to persuade herself that her regard for Charlotte was the only motive.

As Welford's attention was entirely taken up about Charlotte, he had not once thought of Maria ; nor indeed of any body else : and, as he knew nothing of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsden, he believed they were equally

qually strangers to the rest, and had only open'd their doors as soon as they heard of the accident, out of meer humanity : which he thought they carried a little too far, especially when, upon the surgeon's taking leave, they pressed Charlotte to retire, and to compose herself till morning : he therefore interpos'd, and ask'd if she was not well enough to bear the motion of a chair. " There is no occasion for that, Sir," said Mrs. Ramsden ; " for Miss Egerton is among her friends, and will, I dare say, accept of a lodging with us to-night ; as I intend to sit up with her myself." " Then, Madam," said Welford, " I must beg the favour also of a lodging, for I cannot leave Miss Egerton till I see her better." " O my Charlotte," said he, looking fondly at her, " I have a thousand things to say, but I fear this is an improper time : Give me leave, therefore, Madam," (turning to Mrs. Ramsden, with a beseeching aspect) " to wait her recovery in your house." Mrs. Ramsden could not help smiling at his earnestness, and

said, " I am sure, Sir, Mr. Ramsden and  
 " I shall be very glad to have any of  
 " Miss Egerton's friends witnesses to  
 " her recovery ; which, I hope is not far  
 " off." " I am a great deal better, my  
 " dear Mrs. Ramsden," said Charlotte,  
 (who had listen'd with transport to Wel-  
 ford's request) " and shall not consent to  
 " your fatiguing yourself on my ac-  
 " count : I am much obliged to Mr.  
 " Welford also, but desire he would not  
 " deprive himself of his rest : I shall, I  
 " make no doubt, be quite another thing  
 " to-morrow ; and hope, with your per-  
 " mission to have his company at break-  
 " fast." " Thou best of creatures," said  
 Welford, " I thank you for this profusion  
 " of goodness ; but you were always  
 " good. O Charlotte ! how much have  
 " I wrong'd you ? How much I long to  
 " open my whole heart to you ; yet must  
 " I not speak now — only one word —  
 " Are you really better ? Don't conceal  
 " any thing from me. " I will conceal  
 " nothing from you," said Charlotte,  
 blushing at this unexpected tenderness ;

" come

" come to-morrow, and I shall be well." He was going to reply, when Maria, whose astonishment at all she had seen and heard had kept her silent till then, advanced towards Charlotte, and asked her how she did ? Upon that question of hers, Welford said, " I ask your pardon, Miss Peterson, " I never saw you till this moment ; I " hope you have not receiv'd any hurt ?" " No, Sir," replied she faintly ; " but " I have been very much frighted." " Here is Mrs. Freemer," (who just enter'd the room) said Mr. Ramsden, " could not tell whether she was hurt or " not ; but order'd the surgeon to search " her." " You wretch you," cried she, " how can you have the assurance to vent " such falsities ? Nay, I swear you said " so." " Poh, no, said she ; " I tell " you I did not—only when he asked " me a thousand impertinent qustions, " which I would not answer, I told him " I did not know, and bid him examine " himself, if he wanted to be satisfied." " Look ye there now," said Mr. Ramsden, " she confesses the fact ; but I think

" Miss Egerton should be taken care of," continued he to his wife. " I am going to wait on her," said she; " if you will entertain Mr. Welford." Charlotte then rose, assisted by Welford and Mrs. Ramsden, and took leave of the company. The former left her at the bottom of the stairs, with a thousand wishes for her perfect recovery: the latter attended her to the apartment prepared for her.

WHEN Welford return'd to the company, Mr. Ramsden welcom'd him to town, and enquir'd after Mr. and Mrs. Frankly. In the midst of their discourse, Mr. Freemer, having heard of the accident, arrived; and was rejoiced to find, by his lady's vivacity, that she had neither been frighten'd nor hurt much. He insisted, however, on her going home in a chair after supper. Miss Peterson and Welford were then the only visiters. Poor Maria, indeed, did not know which way to turn herself: when Mrs. Ramsden came down from Charlotte, she asked her to stay all night: but she wanted to be at home,

in

in order to give vent to her full heart, and excus'd herself by saying, she believed her aunt would be frighten'd : she then order'd a chair, and Welford offer'd to wait on her, and she accepted his offer with joy. He deliver'd her safe to Mrs. Deacon, who returnd him many thanks for taking care of his niece : and poor Maria had the mortification to see him depart without saying any thing more, than, " I wish you a good night."

WELFORD went back again to Mr. Ramsden's, and, being assur'd that Charlotte was quite easy, took his leave: only begging they would permit him to send very early in the morning: he then retired to his lodgings, and Mrs. Ramsden to Charlotte, with whom she sat till it was late, finding it impossible to make her think of composing herself. She in vain told her, 'twas needless to rack her brains about the sudden change in Welford, (as she would most probably learn every circumstance in process of time) and that rest would enable her the better to

support any discovery he had to make.

" You are extremely kind, my dear Mrs. Ramsden, said she ; " but it is impossible that Welford, after all that passed, can think of me again ? I fear we have both flatter'd ourselves with delusive hopes : his seeming tenderness was undoubtedly owing to his concern for being the cause of so unlucky an accident ; for, tho' I cannot expect his love, I suppose he would not chuse to be the short'ner of my life."

" I beg, my dear," said Mrs. Ramsden, " you would not indulge such reflections now. I allow you have some reason to distrust him, after having been twice neglected by him ; yet I cannot see you have any occasion to suspect his sincerity in this case. He really seems miserable about you, and shows, in my opinion, a great deal of love. You know I am no novice in these affairs : therefore make yourself easy to-night, and to-morrow I dare say will be a day of happiness."

" Well," said Charlotte, " I'll try to compose myself ; but 'tis

" 'tis a difficult task." " I know it is," replied Mrs. Ramsden; " but for once have an opinion of my penetration; I am not often mistaken." She then took leave of her, but left her maid, with orders to be called, if any alteration happen'd for the worse.

CHARLOTTE ruminated till break of day on what had pass'd, without being able to close her eyes; she then fell into a doze and got some refreshment. Welford's servant came while she was sleeping, and carried the agreeable news to his master, who had risen before 'twas light, and walk'd about his room till it was proper to wait upon Charlotte.

WHEN they all met at breakfast, Welford approach'd Charlotte with great respect and diffidence, and told her he was excessively glad to see her so much better than he expected: but hoped she was really so, and had not put on an air of chearfulness in order to conceal any inward disorder. " I have never yet de-

" ceiv'd you, Mr. Welford," said she, smiling. " I am very sensible now, Ma-  
 " dam," said he, " that you never have.  
 " How many happy moments have I lost  
 " by not being so before!" " We will  
 " talk of that," replied she, " hereafter,  
 " if you please. At present give me leave  
 " to make you acquainted with my agree-  
 " able friends." " You will do me a  
 " great pleasure, Madam," said he, " I  
 " am sure I have many apologies to make  
 " for my behaviour last night; but my  
 " concern would not suffer me to stand  
 " upon ceremony." Mr. and Mrs Rams-  
 den thanked him for his compliment with  
 their usual politeness. He then told them  
 what an agreeable intimacy he had com-  
 menc'd at Bath with Mr. and Mrs. Frank-  
 ly, whom he hoped to see in town in a  
 few days. " Pray, Sir," said Charlotte,  
 " did you see or hear of lady Tiers du-  
 " ring your stay there?" " I saw her  
 " once, Madam," said he; " but hope I  
 " shall never see her again." " Bless  
 " me," cried Charlotte, " sure she hasn't  
 " been guilty of any new offence?" " No,  
     " Madam,"

“ Madam,” said he ; “ but I have suf-  
“ fer’d too much from past injuries to  
“ bear the sight of her with patience.”

AFTER breakfast, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsden made a slight excuse to retire. Welford then was once more blest with an opportunity to converse with his mistress in private : he seiz’d her hand, look’d at her with the most respectful tenderness, and thus unbosom’d himself : “ I have  
“ waited, Madam, with the greatest im-  
“ patience, for a favourable moment to  
“ ask your pardon for the numberless er-  
“ rors I have been guilty of since I first  
“ knew you. They have been very glar-  
“ ing ones ; but when you hear how much  
“ I have been impos’d upon, and what  
“ anxieties I have endur’d, I believe you  
“ will be rather inclin’d to pity than con-  
“ demn me. Credulity has occasion’d  
“ all my unhappiness. I was once entit-  
“ led to Miss Egerton’s esteem but that  
“ curs’d poisoner——” “ If you have  
“ done nothing,” said Charlotte, “ de-  
“ signedly to forfeit it, I have not a just

" reason for withdrawing it." " By all  
 " that's good," replied he eagerly, " I  
 " never have: I have been grossly mis-  
 " led. Can you forgive me? Will  
 " you once more receive a man who loves  
 " you fondly and sincerely, and who  
 " could never think of any other woman,  
 " tho' he deem'd you irrecoverably lost."  
 " Well," said she, " to shew you that I  
 " am not of an unrelenting temper, if  
 " you will give me satisfactory reasons for  
 " quitting Kent so suddenly.—You shall  
 " know the whole state of my heart," said  
 he, interrupting her, " from the time of  
 " my arrival at Aston-park."

" WHEN I first accosted you, there was  
 " something in your manner so like Miss  
 " Byersley, that I was affected by it.  
 " When I conversed with you, your voice  
 " did not less affect me: but, as I had  
 " never heard of your having the small-  
 " pox, or changing your name, I had not  
 " the least suspicion that you and she were  
 " so closely related. However, as I  
 " thought you the most agreeable crea-

" ture

" ture I ever beheld, I insensibly became  
 " pleas'd with your conversation, and in a  
 " little time could relish no other per-  
 " son's. You know I gave you a very  
 " exact detail, at your particular request,  
 " of the motives which induced me to  
 " quit (as I thought) an undeserving girl.  
 " I felt a real grief when you inform'd  
 " me that I had been so egregiously de-  
 " ceiv'd ; but, as I seriously believ'd Miss  
 " Byersley was married, from what you  
 " said, I endeavour'd to comfort myself  
 " with the thoughts of having found one  
 " so much resembling her, and not seem-  
 " ingly averse to me. How happily we  
 " whiled away the hours together ! O  
 " Charlotte, what a vast deal of uneasi-  
 " ness would have been avoided if you  
 " had then discover'd yourself ! uneasi-  
 " ness on both sides !" " Very true,"  
 said she ; " but pray go on—" " You  
 " must have seen," continued he, " that  
 " my inclination for you increas'd every  
 " moment : nay, I was once actually on  
 " the point of confessing my love, when  
 " somebody interrupted us ; and, in two

“ or three days afterwards, I receiv'd the  
“ following letter :”

Sir,

“ **I** SHOULD be sorry to have you or any  
“ person imposed upon, when it was  
“ in my power to prevent it. I hear  
“ you are much pleased with Miss Eger-  
“ ton, and have thoughts of taking her  
“ for life. I once, Sir, had the same in-  
“ tention; but luckily discovered she was  
“ not fit for that purpose : in short, she  
“ has already had a fine girl which is at  
“ nurse at L—— in Kent. It was in your  
“ neighbourhood, but she has lately remov-  
“ ed it, to prevent suspicion, I imagine.  
“ Some say the child belongs to a friend  
“ of hers, and that she keeps it out of  
“ charity, but I am well assured she is the  
“ mother of it. If you have any doubts,  
“ you may soon satisfy them by making  
“ enquiry upon the spot.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your unknown humble servant.”

“ Good

" Good God!" cried Charlotte, " who  
 " could set down to write such a false-  
 " hood?" " I could not possibly guess,"  
 said Welford; " but, as I had been too  
 " credulous about my first amour, I was  
 " determin'd to act more warily about  
 " my second: I rode to the place men-  
 " tion'd in the letter, next morning, and  
 " ask'd if there was a child at nurse  
 " thereabouts: upon that question I was  
 " conducted to a small cot; from which  
 " an old woman came out to me, with a  
 " fine girl in her arms: whom she said  
 " her son's wife nurs'd. I inquir'd after  
 " the child's name, and she told me Bell;  
 " and that the lady who took care of it  
 " lived at Mr. Afton's: but added she,  
 " I can't tell whether or no that lady is  
 " the mother; tho' I am apt to think  
 " she is." " What is her name?" said  
 I. " Egerton," replied she. This an-  
 " swer at once dissipat'd my doubts. I  
 " went away fully convinc'd of your un-  
 " worthiness, and shock'd at meeting a  
 " second disappointment. To prevent an  
 " increase of vexation, by continually fee-  
     " ing

“ ing you, I resolved to quit the park di-  
 “ rectly. I was afraid even to trust my-  
 “ self to take a formal leave of you, lest  
 “ you should stagger my resolution ; for  
 “ I felt emotions in your favour.

“ WHEN I came to town every thing  
 “ was disagreeable, flat and insipid to me :  
 “ I had left behind me the only person in  
 “ the world capable of giving me plea-  
 “ sure, and had no relish for the amuse-  
 “ ments which my friends industriously  
 “ procur'd. I took most delight in my  
 “ uncle's company, who was just come  
 “ to town. He observ'd that I was un-  
 “ commonly grave, and frequently tried  
 “ to find out the cause of my dejection.  
 “ He at length, in some measure guessed  
 “ it ; for he told me he fancied I was me-  
 “ lancholy for want of a fair companion :  
 “ he proposed several women of fortune  
 “ to me, and, among the rest, Miss Pe-  
 “ terson : I told him I had no propensity  
 “ to marry, but chose to go down to my  
 “ estate in Yorkshire and settle there ;  
 “ hoping he would favour me with his  
 “ com-

" company. He shook his head at me,  
 " and said, that a Yorkshire journey in  
 " winter would not raise my spirits; but  
 " was of opinion that a tour to Bath  
 " would be both more agreeable and more  
 " efficacious. To oblige him, I agreed  
 " to his proposal. We accordingly set  
 " out, and after staying one night at  
 " Bath, my uncle propos'd going to Bris-  
 " tol, as I had never been in that part of  
 " England. Thither we went; but change  
 " of place will administer no comfort to a  
 " mind diseased. I was just the same de-  
 " jected creature; for Charlotte Byersley  
 " was uppermost in my thoughts. I re-  
 " pented a thousand times, that I had not  
 " asked you to whom she was married,  
 " and where she was to be met with, tho'  
 " I had no intention to see her."

" In this disposition I frequented the  
 " rooms, at the desire of my uncle, who  
 " fancied that a variety of objects, and the  
 " bustle of the place, would restore me  
 " to my former gaiety. Mr. Frankly,  
 " whom I saw there every day, often  
     " joined

“ joined us, and by his lively conversa-  
“ tion and obliging behaviour insinuated  
“ himself into my uncle's good graces, and  
“ even pleased me as much as I could be  
“ pleased. Among other things, he one  
“ one day asked me if I had ever been ac-  
“ quainted with Mr. Byersley's family ?  
“ I sighed at the question, and answer'd  
“ in the affirmative. He then said, “ I  
“ am afraid, Sir, I have caused you to re-  
“ collect a name you are desirous of for-  
“ getting. Perhaps you are the same  
“ Mr. Welford he once designed for his  
“ daughter, before he received so great  
“ an addition to his estate by the death of  
“ Mr. Egerton, whose name he thereupon  
“ took. I started at the name of Eger-  
“ ton ; and before the hurry of my spirits  
“ would give me leave to reply, Mr.  
“ Frankly thus went on : “ But perhaps  
“ you did not know that circumstance, as  
“ you have been abroad ; nor that Miss  
“ Egerton has had the small-pox ; tho'  
“ she is so very agreeable, notwith-  
“ standing, that she is surrounded con-  
“ tinually with lovers.” “ What,  
“ Sir,”

" Sir," cried I, full of amazement, " is  
 " not Miss Byersley married ? " " No,  
 " Sir," replied he, " Miss Byersley, now  
 " Miss Egerton, is not married : she has  
 " refused many offers, on account of a  
 " young gentleman of great merit who  
 " left her in an odd manner, some time  
 " before her father's death ; and which  
 " behaviour she now attributes to the trea-  
 " chery of a female friend, Miss Arabella  
 " Seward, who was married to Sir Fran-  
 " cis Tiers. This lady has been so re-  
 " duced by her husband's extravagance,  
 " as to accept of Miss Egerton's assist-  
 " ance, which she generously offer'd the  
 " moment she knew the situation of her  
 " affairs : nay, she kept her little daugh-  
 " ter at nurse, whom she had deserted, for  
 " some time, unknown to her.

" IMAGINE, Madam, my astonishment  
 " at this discovery. I stood a long while  
 " quite confounded and unable to speak.  
 " As soon as I could, I broke out into  
 " these exclamations : " How have I  
 " been every way deceived ! How have I  
 " injured

“ injured a deserving woman! What  
“ atonement can I make for my follies!  
“ You are acquainted with Miss Eger-  
“ ton, I suppose, Sir,” said I to him ;  
“ can you inform me who this is, for  
“ whom, you say, she had refused so many  
“ offers; and can you tell me if she is  
“ still at Aston-park, where I left her.  
“ Mr. Frankly then look’d earnestly at  
“ me, and said with a smile, “ If you have  
“ so lately left the lady, Sir, you are able  
“ to inform me about her, but—I lost all  
“ patience here, and answer’d hastily, “ I  
“ beg you would not trifle with me, Sir;  
“ I cannot well bear it : I have been long,  
“ very long in an error, which nothing  
“ but the immediate sight of Miss Eger-  
“ ton can free me from. O say, if you  
“ know, where she is to be found, and ex-  
“ cuse the disorder I cannot help feeling  
“ when I reflect on past scenes.” Mr.  
“ Frankly then said, “ I can easily ex-  
“ cuse your impatience, Sir, if it pro-  
“ ceeds from love ; but I must not an-  
“ swer your question till I am satisfied in  
“ one point. Do you really feel the same  
“ tender

" tender passion for Miss Egerton that  
 " you once felt for Miss Byersley? Can  
 " you ask that question seriously?" said  
 " I. " Does not every look, every word  
 " discover that she alone possesses my  
 " heart?" " Why then," said he, " did  
 " you leave her a second time so abrupt-  
 " ly?" " Don't be surpriz'd, Sir," con-  
 tinued he, " Mrs. Frankly has the ho-  
 " nour to be very intimate with Miss E-  
 " gerton, and both she and I interest our-  
 " selves greatly in her affairs. 'Tis from  
 " her I have learnt all that has passed  
 " between you: but Miss Egerton her-  
 " self is quite at a loss to account for your  
 " acting with so much seeming inconsis-  
 " tency.." " I am almost ashamed, Sir,"  
 " said I, " to tell you the truth; but  
 " here is the occasion of all my incon-  
 " sistencies. I then show'd him the letter:  
 " as soon as he cast his eyes upon it, he  
 said, " Now Sir, the perplexing riddle is  
 " found out: this is young Rivers's hand,  
 " I was once well acquainted with it." He  
 " then told me in what manner you disco-  
 " ver'd his marriage with his cousin to  
 " Miss

“ Miss Aston ; which, he supposed;  
“ came to his knowledge by the tattling  
“ of the servants, and occasion’d that letter  
“ by way of revenge. I declared I was  
“ thoroughly convinc’d of your inno-  
“ cence ; but Mrs. Frankly insisted on my  
“ going to lady Tiers, that my conviction  
“ might be strengthen’d. Lady Tiers,  
“ at his request, related all the means she  
“ used to separate us, with so much cool-  
“ ness and unconcern, that I could scarce-  
“ ly keep my temper. When I left her,  
“ I set out directly for London, where I  
“ arriv’d yesterday in the evening. Just  
“ as I had paid off my chaise at the inn, a  
“ servant hired it for his master, Sir Po-  
“ sitive Puff, who he said was come up  
“ to town, to marry his nephew to Miss  
“ Egerton. This was an unexpected  
“ alarm : I then concluded that your pa-  
“ tience was exhausted, and that you had  
“ determin’d to accept the addresses of a  
“ less capricious lover : I fear’d I was too  
“ late, and therefore hasten’d to see you  
“ that night ; tho’ I had intended to wait  
“ till this morning. I got into a hack-  
“ ney-

" ney-coach, and order'd the fellow to  
 " drive as fast as he possibly could to your  
 " lodgings : you know what happen'd  
 " afterwards. Thank heaven ! you have  
 " had so narrow an escape. If you can  
 " pardon me for all the uneasiness I have  
 " occasion'd, I shall once more hope to be  
 " happy with you." Here he finish'd  
 his narrative, and look'd fondly at Char-  
 lotte, waiting for her reply ; but she could  
 not utter a word. Excess of joy prevented  
 her : she turn'd her head aside, and drew  
 out her handkerchief to hide her confu-  
 sion. But Welford's impatience would  
 not let her remain long in that position :  
 he gently removed the handkerchief, and  
 found, to his infinite surprize, her eyes  
 bathed in tears. So unlook'd for a sight  
 melted him. " Have I again," said he  
 to her, " unknowingly, undesignedly dis-  
 pleased you ? Tell me, my charmer,  
 " what new offence I have committed ?  
 " You have not displeased me ; you have  
 " committed no offence ; you have given  
 " me the highest satisfaction. The con-  
 dition you see me in arises from that  
 " satis-

" satisfaction. I was never expert at dis-  
 " sembling, nor can I now hide the joy I  
 " feel, at finding I am still agreeable to the  
 " only man in the world, who will be ever  
 " so to me." " My dearest Charlotte,"  
 said he, " how you transport me! How  
 " undeserving I have been of such an in-  
 " estimable treasure! but the the future  
 " study of my life shall be to reward so  
 " much goodness. Yet tell me, my love,  
 " why you prolonged your own and my  
 " anxiety, by not making yourself known  
 " at Aston-park." I was afraid," said  
 she, " that the small-pox might have  
 " render'd my person disagreeable to you,  
 " and imagin'd that, if I had discover'd  
 " myself to you, you would think your-  
 " self oblig'd from a principle of honour,  
 " to marry me, in case of no engagement,  
 " tho' contrary to inclination: I there-  
 " fore resolved to wait till I saw what ef-  
 " fect my person had on you; for, dear  
 " as you are to me, I could not accept  
 " of your hand without your heart."  
 " What charming delicacy!" said he—  
 " but, believe me, my life, 'twas need-  
     " less.

" less. The most regular set of features,  
 " and the most blooming complexion,  
 " may gain a momentary admiration, and  
 " strike the eye, but seldom win the heart,  
 " where the more durable charms of sense,  
 " tenderness and delicacy are wanting.  
 " These charms my Charlotte possesses,  
 " and these alone would render her very  
 " alluring, if she had no other." Charlotte  
 blush'd at the fond encomiums of  
 her lover, and gave him repeated assur-  
 ances of the delight she felt on receiving  
 them. She then began to think they had  
 excluded Mr. and Mrs. Ramsden too long  
 from their apartment, and proposed send-  
 ing for them. He consented, with great  
 difficulty, to her proposal, telling her that  
 they ought not to be treated like com-  
 mon lovers, after so tedious and painful a  
 separation. " Well, then," said she smil-  
 ing, " one half hour more, and then I  
 " must bid them adieu." This half hour  
 they spent in relating the several incidents  
 which had happened in their families.  
 When Welford express'd his concern for

the loss of Mr. Byersley, poor Charlotte could not refrain from tears. "Sweet sensibility," said he, (while he fondly kissed them away) "how amiable is this grief! but I must entreat you not to indulge it, for fear it should injure your health. I cannot reflect on my father's death," said she, "without being deeply affected: if he was now alive, how happy would he be in disposing of his daughter to the man whom he first singled out for her!" "Be composed, my love," said he, "and comfort yourself with thinking that you are going to comply with his intentions, by making that man your husband." Charlotte then went in search of Mrs. Ramsden, to thank her for taking so much care of her, and to wish her a good morning. "Indeed, my dear," said Mrs. Ramsden, "I shall not part with you in such a hurry, I have a great deal to say to you, and a great deal to hear, and shall therefore insist on your staying to dine. Mr.

Rams-

" Ramsden is gone down to ask Mr. Welford, who, I believe, will not refuse him, " when he knows you are to be of the " party." Charlotte accepted her friend's invitation with pleasure : while she was there, both Mrs. Freemer and Miss Peterson sent to know how she did.

WHEN the evening approach'd, Charlotte took leave of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsden, but first engaged them to breakfast with her next morning ; and was conducted to her lodging by Welford.

WHEN she was alone, she ruminated on the company she had left, and the conversation that had past. The greatest part of the night was dedicated to reflection. The pleasure she felt at the return of the only man she could love, and the removal of her doubts, with regard to the sincerity of his passion, would not let her take her accustom'd repose. She rose early, being very impatient to see Mrs. Ramsden, who came according

to promise, and congratulated her on her approaching happiness ; adding, with a smile, “ I hope, my dear, you will have “ a better opinion of my predictions an- “ other time. You have ever treated “ me, like a real friend.” “ My dear “ Mrs. Ramsden,” said she ; “ and, I be- “ lieve, had it not been for your agreeable “ society, I never should have supported “ my uneasiness so tolerably. I am only “ afraid I shall now be as troublesome “ to you with my joy.” “ O never “ fear,” said Mrs. Ramsden, “ that will “ not be so violent.” “ Do you then “ gravely think,” said Charlotte, with some emotion, “ I have still any reason “ to doubt Mr. Welford’s sincerity ? ” “ No, no, my dear,” said she, “ not in the “ least; you mistake my meaning, which is, “ that joy is seldom so powerful as grief ; “ whether we are naturally more inclin- “ ed to be disconsolate than cheerful, I “ cannot tell. You rarely hear of people “ unable to bear the smiles of prosperity ; “ but every day produces some wretch “ sinking

" sinking under the frowns of adversity." Charlotte was going to reply, when the entrance of Mrs. Freemer prevented her. They both expressed their surprize at seeing her so early in the morning. " Why, ay," said she, " I don't generally think on rising so soon ; but I come to unfold a secret, which would not let me sleep a wink." " Sure," replied Mrs. Ramsden, smiling, " it must be something of vast importance." " Pray let us hear it," said Charlotte. " Why then," said she, with a little hesitation, " you must know I durst not trust any soul alive with it except you two, for fear they should laugh at me. But you are so fond of your man ; and Charlotte, I suppose, is going the same way that I—" Here she made a full stop ; but with much pressing thus went on : " Lord, I am sure I look so awkward—don't I ? — But it must out ? — Know then that I am going to—to—love my husband." Mrs. Ramsden and Charlotte could not possibly

bly check a violent fit of laughter at the close of this speech. "Look you there now," said Mrs. Freemer; "I thought I ran no risque with you sober, serious creatures; but had I told lady Di herself, she could not have behaved worse." "I ask your pardon, dear Madam," said Mrs. Ramsden, still laughing, "and commend you highly for your intentions; but the manner of your delivering them was so very droll, that I hope you will excuse my merriment about it." "Pray, Mrs. Freemer," said Charlotte, "how long has this loving fit been upon you?" "Lord, child," said she, "why, ever since he so quietly agreed to put off the Shropshire journey; and then the wretch show'd so much concern when I was overturn'd, that I could be very fond of him, if I was not afraid of being thought foolish and ridiculous: but there is something so terribly shocking in giving up one's acquaintance, for that deplorable reason, because

" because one likes one's husband's company better, than I don't think I ever can do it after all.—Does Mr. Free-  
 " mer then insist on your not seeing any  
 " of your former companions?" " In-  
 " sist," cried Mrs. Freemer, pertly; " he  
 " insist?—No, no, child; not so bad as  
 " that neither. But I shall be quite ashamed  
 " to see lady Di, Miss Giddy, or any  
 " of that set, when I am so strangely  
 " metamorphosed into a mere household  
 " dove: they would find me out pre-  
 " fently. I have heard my lady declare  
 " a thousand times, that she has an ex-  
 " cellent knack at smelling out tame  
 " wives; and if she ever happens to be  
 " placed near one by accident, always  
 " shakes her clothes afterwards to pre-  
 " vent an infection." " Thou wild  
 " thing," cried Mrs. Ramsden. " Ay,  
 said she, with an affected sigh, " I was  
 " wild and hair-brained once; but 'tis all  
 " over with me; I shall be fit company  
 " in a little time for nobody but you and  
 " Charlotte. I should blush to death to

" be found in this humour any where  
 " else : but pray, Charlotte let us have  
 " the denouement of your history ; tho'  
 " I suppose (seeing Welford enter the  
 " room) it will not be proper now.  
 " Well, I'll come and have a *tête à*  
 " *tête* with you some morning : so adieu."

Mrs. Ramsden would also have taken her leave of Charlotte, but she would not let her. They passed the remainder of the morning in talking over the approaching happy day. Welford begg'd that it might not be long deferr'd. Charlotte said, " I shall in a little time,  
 " sir, have no will but yours : but I  
 " think you would pay your uncle a  
 " proper compliment, by asking his con-  
 " sent." " My uncle, Madam," said he, " knows of my attachment to you,  
 " and has heard so many fine things  
 " of you, that he earnestly wishes to  
 " call you niece, and is desirous of be-  
 " ing introduced to you." " I shall  
 " always be extremely glad," said she,  
 " to see any of your friends, and beg  
     " you

" you will attend him whenever it is  
 " agreeable." " This afternoon, Ma-  
 " dam," said he, " if you are not en-  
 " gag'd: for I own I think every mo-  
 " ment lost that is not spent with you." Charlotte assented with pleasure. Mrs. Ramsden left them soon afterwards. Welford staid till he thought she wanted to dress, and then return'd to his uncle.

As soon as Charlotte had dined, Miss Peterson came to see her. This young lady, before she knew Welford was so firmly engaged, fancied she could easily give him up to another: but now found the task very difficult; and told Charlotte, she had not acted with the openness which might have been expected from a person of her disposition and character. Charlotte pitied her the more, as she reflected how much reason she herself had to love Welford; and thus replied, " My dear Miss Peterson, I know that appearances are not in my favour; but when you have heard my story, I am  
 sure

sure you will alter your opinion of me." She then related every thing that had happened to her from her first acquaintance with Welford, and thus concluded : " You see, my dear Maria, I could not prudently act otherwise. I am only concern'd that you cannot be in so happy a situation as I am : but time, I am perswaded, will make a change in your way of thinking. That pleasing form, and that amiable mind of yours, will every day gain new admirers ; among whom you will, I hope, find one capable of fixing your inclinations." Maria return'd no answer but a sigh ; then rose from her seat, saluted Charlotte, and said, " I sincerely wish you and Mr. Welford all the happiness this world can afford." After this speech she hurried into the chair that waited for her, in spite of Charlotte's efforts to detain her.

As soon as she was gone, the two Welfords made their appearance. The elder told

told Charlotte, he was extremely pleased with his nephew's choice, and Charlotte was no less pleased with him. He was an agreeable man, and, having spent the younger part of his life abroad, more conversible and entertaining than his brother, who had almost constantly resided in Yorkshire.

WELFORD press'd Charlotte again to fix the nuptial day ; as every thing relating to settlements, &c. &c. had been adjusted in the morning. " I am not fond of delaying it," said Charlotte ; " but some little time is necessary for us both to—" " Oh ! Madam," said the old gentleman, interrupting her, " I'll engage my nephew will be ready in a very little time, " and I dare say you will give me leave " to come and help you to spur " your people." Charlotte smiled, and assured him she always should esteem his visits in a particular manner.

IN a day or two afterwards, Mr. and Mrs. Frankly arriv'd in town from Bath, and immediately

immediately waited on Charlotte, who expressed her gratitude in the strongest terms, for interesting themselves in her affairs.

“ I too,” said Welford, who was present, “ am greatly indebted to Mr. Frankly for the favour he confer’d on me at Bath; and I am now doubly indebted to him, since my Charlotte shews me so much esteem, by publickly confessing the satisfaction she has received from it.” Mr. and Mrs. Frankly assured them both, that they should always rejoice to think they had contributed to the happiness of so deserving a pair; a pair to whom they were under so many obligations.

“ But, prithee, Welford,” said Frankly, jocosely, “ what are you about? Methinks you mudle away a great deal of time: I thought to have saluted Miss Eger-ton by the name of Mrs. Welford ere now.” “ Bless me!” cried Charlotte, blushing, “ what a hurry you are in, Mr. Frankly?” “ Ay, Madam,” said he, “ and I’ll lay my life he is in a far greater

“ one,

" one, only I suppose you have absolutely  
" forbid him to speak his mind upon  
" this occasion. See there, Miss Eger-  
" ton," said Welford, " every body is on  
" my side. My uncle, Mr. Ramsden,  
" Mr. Frankly, nay, Mrs. Freemer said,  
" but yesterday, she thought we were a  
" tedious while. I beg therefore, my  
" dear Charlotte, you would make a  
" little dispatch." " Well," replied she,  
smiling, " I must ask Mr. and Mrs.  
" Ramsden what day will best suit them,  
" and then I'll fix it." " Thou dearest  
" creature," cried Welford, " how you  
" transport me!"

IN a week after this meeting, Charlotte went with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsden in their coach to church, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Frankly, Mr. and Mrs. Freemer : they were joined there by Welford and his uncle, and young Aston. Miss Peter-  
son was invited, but had left London, after the farewell visit to Charlotte : she was gone into Hampshire with a daughter

ter of Mrs. Deacon's, who married a gentleman of that country, to spend the winter months there.

MR. Frankly, at his own request, gave away the amiable Charlotte to Welford, who receiv'd her with the highest transport. They return'd to Mr. Ramsden's, where they dined, and, in the evening, Welford conducted his bride to an elegant house he had taken, with her probation, in a polite part of the town. Thus ended the troubles of two of the most deserving persons that ever lived. I have nothing now to add but a brief account of the other characters of note mention'd in this work.

LADY Tiers return'd to London soon after Charlotte's marriage, and went to pay a congratulatory visit; tho' she neither had the gratitude nor good manners to send her a line during her stay at Bath, where she subsisted entirely on Charlotte's bounty. The first news she received

ceived upon her arrival in town was the death of Sir Francis ; who did not leave enough to satisfy the clamour of his creditors. Charlotte therefore promised to allow her an annuity, sufficient to maintain her genteelly ; tho' she declined keeping up any acquaintance with her, at Welford's particular desire : but lady Tiers did not long enjoy the favours of her benefactress. She died about six months after her husband ; leaving her little daughter at nurse, whom Charlotte sent for, and brought up as her own child.

Miss Peterson spent a very melancholy winter in the country ; but upon the return of spring, young Aston made frequent visits to her, which she condescended to receive, provided he would lay aside the lover, and only act the friend. In short, he was so assiduous in his new character, that the pretty Maria at length consented to become Mrs. Aston, and they are now a very happy couple.

MRS.

Mrs. Freemer, convinced of her husband's merit, and indulgent fondness of her, has conquered many of her fashionable follies, and makes a very tolerable wife.

**The END of the Fourth and Last Book:**

